



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

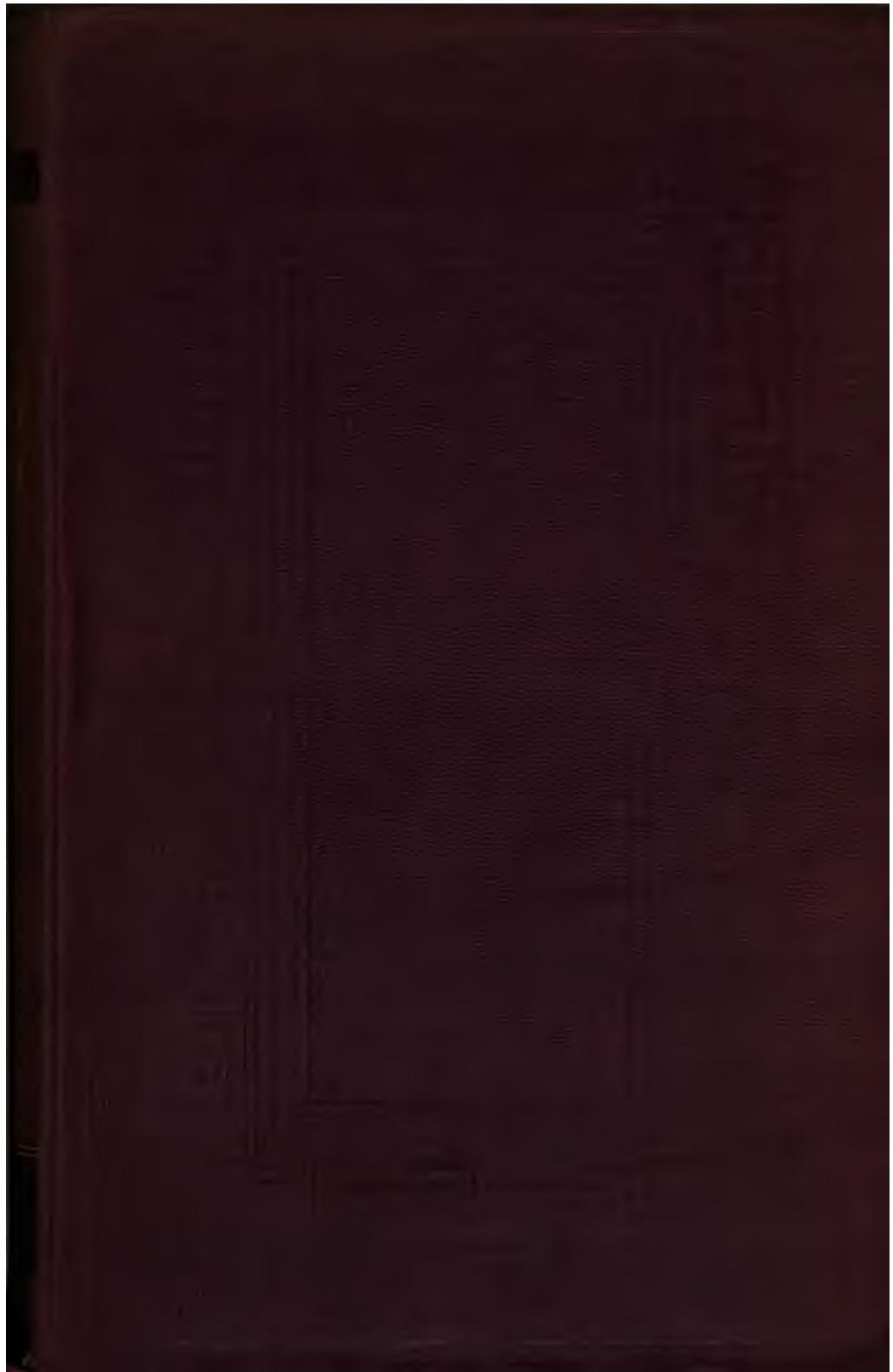
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600053254P







MR. NEWBY'S NEW PUBLICATIONS.

NEW NOVELS.

I.

In 2 vols. post 8vo. price 21s.

COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE.

"Coming events cast their shadows before was never more fully illustrated than by this brilliant tale, unexceptionable in its moral tone, graceful in language, graphic in style, and deeply interesting, at the same time shadowing forth such cheerful lessons that it should be read in every family circle."—*Guardian*.

II.

In 1 vol., price 10s. 6d.

MY COUNTRY NEIGHBOURS.

By G. M. STERNE,

Great-Cousin of Laurence Sterne, author of the "Sentimental Journey."

III.

In 3 vols., price 31s. 6d.

G E O R G I E B A R R I N G T O N .

By the Author of "Old Memories." &c.

"This novel is full of power, full of interest, and full of those fascinations and spells which none but the extraordinarily-gifted can produce."—*Globe*.

IV.

In 1 vol. fcap. 8vo., price 4s. (Now ready.)

GLAD TIDINGS.

V.

In 3 vols. post 8vo., price 31s. 6d. (In December.)

TRIED IN THE FIRE.

By MRS. MACKENZIE DANIELS,

Author of "My Sister Minnie," "The Old Maid of the Family," &c.

VI.

2 vols. post 8v., price 21s.

HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY.

By MRS. AUGUSTUS PEEL.

VII.

In 3 vols. post 8vo., price 31s. 6d. (In November.)

THE HOME AND THE PRIEST.

By GIROLAMO VOLPE,

Author of "Memoirs of an Ex-Capuchin; or Scenes in Monastic Life in Italy."

The late Leigh Hunt's opinion of the work :—"I think the work interesting; its exhibitions, in particular of some of the passions, masterly; and I am also of opinion that all which is related of Italian manners and customs, and of the vices and machinations of the priesthood, would be extremely welcome to my countrymen in general."

"Fiction, Fielding proves, is finer than history, and the reason is obvious—the writer of fiction, while he can be perfectly true to the nature of the facts which he relates, can also do that which the historian cannot do—he can tell the whole by help of abstraction. *Michelet* could tell much in his book, the "*Priest and the Family*"; but limited to the record of fact, he could not let you into the scene itself and *show* you the priest corrugated and corrupting. This has been done by Signor Girolamo Volpe in "*The Home and the Priest*," a novel of contemporary history, which, in the development of a story of real life, shows the working of those very causes which have led to the revolt of the Italians against the oppression alike of the Priest and the stranger. The larger portion of the book has been revised by Leigh Hunt, who was revising while he read; and who read, as he many times declared, with a constantly increasing interest, both in the story, and in the opportune illustration of the present Italian movement."—*Spectator*.

THE GREAT EXPERIMENT.

A NOVEL.

BY MISS MOLESWORTH,

AUTHOR OF "A STUMBLE ON THE THRESHOLD," "CLAUDE," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

"No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them."
ECCLESIASTES.

VOL I.

London:

T. CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,
30, WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.
1860.

[*The Right of Translation is reserved.*]

249. w. 296.



INTRODUCTION.

“Marry! that marry is the very theme
I came to talk about.”

ROMEO AND JULIET.

WHEN first we ventured into the arena of literature, a profound critic—one of the soft-spoken kind, who “damn with faint praise,” and crush with contemptuous civility—solemnly warned us never again to take pen in hand, unless we had something entirely and indisputably *new* to communicate. Now we might fling Solomon in the teeth of this clamorous demander of novelty, or seek to abash him by the apostolic condemnation of a similar propensity in the ancient Athenians; but we feel that in these days of tubular bridges (“*pour joindre le sol d'Irlande à celui de la métropole*,” as the French journals

II.

INTRODUCTION.

accurately describe Mr. Stephenson's wondrous construction at Menai), photographic portraits, electric telegraphs, painless surgery, &c., the authority even of the wisest of men will hardly enable us to combat the prevailing belief that there are new things under the sun; and if the daily newspaper is voted insipid unless it contains an account of at least one marvellous event or discovery, some attempt at originality may fairly be expected in a novel.

We confess, therefore, to some qualms on announcing that the subject we here propose to treat is—**MARRIAGE**. For how can the most inventive genius hope to invest with an air of freshness a theme so hackneyed, which has in all ages of the world's history furnished materials to the philosopher, the satirist, the poet, the novelist, and the legislator; from Adam's grandiloquent harangues in praise of wedded bliss (as per favour of Mr. John Milton), down to the last debate in the House of Commons, on the extension of the Court of Divorce. We find refuge alone in this consideration, viz., that if we are not, by any manner of means, the first expounders of the science of Matrimony, we stand a reasonable chance of being among the

last to enlarge upon that fruitful topic; for should the Socialist theories lately popular on the continent of Europe, and the Mormon doctrine now attracting crowds of disciples to the western hemisphere, continue to be propagated with success, marriage, as at present understood, may soon be reckoned among the number of obsolete institutions, and offer a field of research to the antiquary rather than to the portayist of existing ideas and customs.

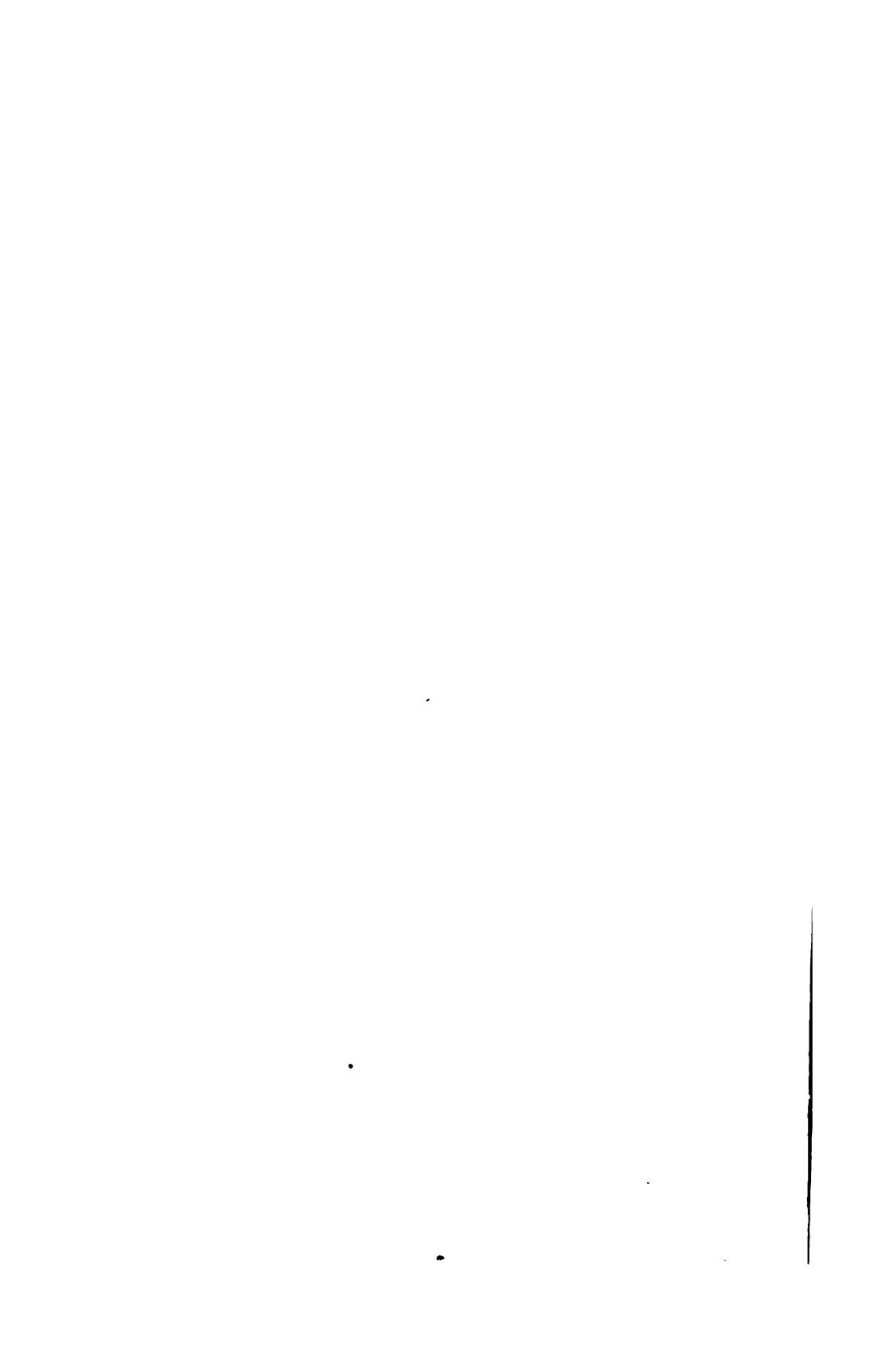
It is not our purpose to enter into a solemn disquisition upon the primary ordinance, the duties, and responsibilities of matrimony; still less to squander sage precepts upon a theme concerning which no mortal ever takes advice—or, if he do, repents it. No; let all prudent people guard themselves from interference in the contraction of wedlock, as scrupulously as they avoid meddling with its results. If all marriages are not exactly made in heaven, most assuredly few happy ones are manufactured on earth. We consider accomplices before the fact in these affairs, to be as much involved in the guilt or folly of the principals as the seconds in a duel. If two sane persons think proper to shoot, or marry one another, let them; the risk

is theirs, theirs also the gain or loss; but visit with the heaviest condemnation those who stand coolly by, and without the excuse of anger or self-interest to blind their eyes, instigate their fellows to the sacrifice of a human life, or the irremediable destruction of life's happiness.

For who can fathom the secret springs of joy or woe? who is so deeply versed in moral chemistry as to tell what elements of character will combine to form a harmonious whole, what others will for ever refuse to amalgamate? Inscrutable, indeed, to common eyes, are the workings of what one may call the connubial instinct! There are few perhaps who have not, at one time or other, been led to speculate upon the reasons which guided certain of their married acquaintance in the selection of a partner; to enquire what secret spell drew together persons not outwardly congenial; why, having all the world to choose from, they fixed upon each other? In many cases, of course, the impulse is plain enough; in some the mixture of motives renders it difficult to fix upon the predominant one; a few will be found inexplicable upon any grounds.

A kind of matrimonial thermometer might be constructed (substituting Cupid for Mercury),

by which to test the influences most powerfully concerned in such transactions. Starting from matches of convenience and chance contact, as from freezing point, we come to those of esteem and simple liking, which may be marked temperate; higher up in the scale stand unions founded on decided preference and warm affection, corresponding with blood heat; ardent and unconquerable passions rising to boiling point. Alliances contracted from sordid, or otherwise unworthy motives, would fall several degrees below zero; while we may perhaps add to the list those rare specimens of purely intellectual or ethereal attraction, of super-sublimated sentiment, as typified by the stage at which water passes into steam or vapour. Any ingenious reader with an analytical turn of mind, may derive both amusement and edification from trying by this scale the conjugal atmosphere of his neighbours, or of those personages to whom we hope to present him.



THE GREAT EXPERIMENT.

CHAPTER I.

“Matrons ever on the watch
To mar a son’s or make a daughter’s match.”

BYRON.

FIRST on our list stands Mrs. Leycester, who will supply some illustrations of our theme; for a widow, of uneasy fortune—that is to say, with an income barely adequate to sustain her position in the world—and with six daughters to establish, may fairly be considered an authority upon the science, or perhaps we should say upon the art of matrimony. Mrs. Leycester had been the belle of her year, and married, at the end of her first season, a young man of family

and some means, which, however, neither party understood how to husband. (Ought we not rather to phrase it, how to wife? Economy is so generally a female attribute.) Both had expensive tastes, a preference for the brilliant pleasures of London life over the more solid but less exciting enjoyments their share of wealth would have procured them elsewhere, and a perilous laxity of principle as to their right to indulge in lavish expenditure. That they did not grievously outrun their finances, arose solely from some stray perceptions on Mr. Leycester's side, that debt and dishonour bore a strong likeness to one another, if, indeed, they were not identical.

Yet so little was this innate sense of rectitude accompanied by common prudence, that if he did not contract obligations utterly beyond his power to fulfil, he made, on the other hand, no provision for the wants of an increasing household. When the birth of nine children, in less than twice the number of years, forced at last upon his attention the necessity of retrenchment, the measure came too late to be of much use. Very shortly after his eyes were opened to his parental duty, they closed for ever upon the

world, and his widow was left, with encumbered resources, to accomplish the distasteful and now not very easy task.

A vain and frivolous woman, trained from childhood to every species of self-indulgence, it may readily be conceived how difficult she found it to feed, lodge, educate, clothe, and, as they grew in years, *dress* and display to advantage so numerous a progeny, upon a sum not exceeding that which she had been accustomed to squander upon her own gratifications. That sum still maintained her in what many would have called affluent circumstances; but she could not reconcile herself to the adoption of a more retired way of life. It would be unfair to her daughters, she urged, to deprive them of the advantages of good society, and the needful savings were therefore effected in what are usually considered the essentials of comfort, rather than in its superfluous adjuncts. In short, instead of cutting her coat according to her cloth, as the proverb expresses it, Mrs. Leycester was determined to shape a limited amount of cloth into a coat of a pre-determined fashion, and the result was a garment conduced neither to the ease nor to the credit of the wearer.

It was a great consolation to the widowed mother, as she sighed over her weekly and quarterly disbursements, that all her offspring were pretty; and this, not from mere maternal vanity, but because it gave her strong hopes of disposing of them satisfactorily in marriage. Disposing of them! What evidence the term affords of the spirit in which such transfers are habitually conducted! With what grace can we cast up our eyes at the undisguised traffic carried on by Circassian parents, while we adopt in our own language so purely mercantile a phrase to represent (as it does but too correctly) a transaction which ought to be, of all others, the most removed from any intermixture of mercenary considerations!

Mrs. Leycester's system of business was very simple. She was not one of those clever sales-women who angle so successfully for rich or titled customers; nor had she the patience to carry on a steady trade, watching the turn of the market, indeed, but suffering the supply to adjust itself naturally to the demand—the plan which, perhaps, answers best in the long run. She rather resembled one of those speculative dealers who so often figure now-a-days in the bankrupt list; having a large assortment of attractive goods

which must be cleared off without delay, intending purchasers might make themselves very sure that no reasonable *offer* would be refused.

Before proceeding to introduce the young people to the reader, it may be as well to account for the somewhat uncommon appellations bestowed upon them. It chanced that Mrs. Leycester's maiden name had been Flora Garden, and her fancy was that each of her offspring should bear the name of some ornament of the parterre. Rose, Violet, and Hyacinth (restored, at Mr. Leycester's suggestion, to its proper rank as a male appellative) presented themselves readily enough to her choice; but as her family increased, the difficulty of selection became greater. The Seven Champions of Christendom furnished a precedent for adopting Eglantine as the designation of her third daughter; Veronica served to identify the fourth; a pair of twin sons were christened respectively Narcissus and Valerian: but here the list of ordinary garden flowers came to an end, and recourse being had to exotic aid, the two next girls received the names of Azalea and Camellia.

How "Mrs. Leycester's bouquet," as her acquaintance phrased it, would have fared had more

children been born to her, was a matter of much discussion both to her and to them; whether she must have culled blossoms from France and Italy, as Marguerite and Gelsomina; or borrowed terms from Greece, as Ion and Euphrasia; descended into the kitchen garden for Basil; or wandered into the shrubbery in search of Acacia and Syringa; or, finally, whether she would have promoted to her nursery the sweet-tasted Angelica and the fragrant Vanilla. All these ingenious speculations, however, were thrown away, as the Fates, in this instance, seemed to consider nine a perfect number, and cut the thread of Mr. Leycester's life before he had time to make any addition to it.

Some eight or nine years had since elapsed, and his first-born, Rose, was now on the point of marriage, to her mother's intense delight, for the young lady was approaching twenty-five, and a lengthening train of junior sisters were waiting their turn to "come out." Miss Leycester, unlike the other members of her family, was a decided brunette; she had a clear dark skin, with a flush of deep carnation showing through the cheek, long dark eyes, and a languishing aspect; somewhat deficient in height, her person betrayed

a tendency to fullness, which heightened the voluptuous character of her beauty. Indolent, romantic, and inordinately fond of dress, she had, after numerous flirtations, taken steady aim at the Rev. Sidney Aguilar, a young clergyman of the Highest Church school, whom she contrived to inspire with a violent passion.

We pause here to note the remarkable fact that the most celebrated belles of our acquaintance, after coquetting through several seasons with the army, the navy, the bar, and the landed interest, have ultimately fallen to the lot of the clergy, through what species of fascination (on both sides) we confess ourselves puzzled to discern.

The Reverend Sidney had evidently been intended by Nature for a handsome man, but had been spoilt in the making. Of towering stature and massive proportions, there was yet some fatal defect of symmetry or carriage, which marred the whole, and left on the mind no impression but that of awkward bulk. The strongly-marked features wanted meaning, the dove-like eye assorting ill with the aquiline nose and chin, while the soft, timid voice issuing from that broad, manly chest, surprised the hearer as much

as the shrill note by which the ponderous elephant evinces his feelings. None of these incongruities, however, were perceptible to the multitude of his female admirers, nor to the lady of his affections. She was perfectly contented to divide her hours between sitting on a sofa, attired in all the colours of the rainbow, her hand locked in his, exchanging tender nonsense in Italian; and playing amorous ditties on the piano, accompanied by him on the accordion, an instrument on which this amiable giant performed with no mean skill.

Mrs. Leycester was not exactly satisfied with a country curate as a match for her daughter; she thought it, besides, a bad omen that the first wedding in her family should be attended with so little *éclat*, for she had a notion that matrimonial luck was contagious, and that when one sister drew a great prize in the lottery, it often made the fortunes of the rest. However, in Rose's case there was really no time to be lost; Mr. Aguilar, though not rich himself, came of a monied stock, and was commonly reputed to be the favorite nephew of a wealthy and childless uncle, so that matters might have been much worse after all. Consent was given on both

sides; negotiations were set on foot with sempstressses, milliners, pastrycooks, and bridesmaids, and Mrs. Leycester, nearly at the summit of bliss, permitted herself to talk sentimentally of the union of two fresh young hearts, yet untainted by worldly prudence. It was not to her children, be it remarked, that she held this language; far other principles were inculcated at home; but as no one could impute mercenary considerations to the fair *fiancée*, her mother thought that circumstance might as well be made the most of, to impress upon the minds of other suitors the charming simplicity and disinterestedness of the natures with which they would have to deal.

In this adroit little piece of hypocrisy she was very ill-supported by her second daughter, Violet, a young lady who, though not yet arrived at what the law considers years of discretion, was as capable of subduing every thought, feeling, and desire to the cold calculations of worldly wisdom as if she had numbered fourscore. Faultless in shape and feature as a "masterpiece of Grecian art," fair and delicate, graceful and majestic, she was as frigid and passionless as the marble she resembled. Her

warmest admirers never claimed for her any mental superiority; those who were calm enough to discriminate pronounced her very loveliness insipid, while the opposing faction had many tales to relate of her haughty self-assertion and her ambitious aspirations.

She aimed, indeed, at no common mark. When first introduced into society, she had attracted the notice of an elderly connoisseur, long an undisputed leader of fashion, whose distinguished position still gave weight to his opinions. Courted, flattered, and caressed by the opulent Duke of Broadwater, Violet's head was fairly turned; no vision seemed too wild for his means to realise. Already lifted by his influence far above the sphere in which she had been accustomed to move; admitted into an arena of splendour surpassing all her previous conceptions; and led to expect, through the same powerful agency, a permanent situation in the court at which he procured her presentation, she cherished secret designs upon the coronet of her patron, undeterred by the disparity of age and condition, or the improbability of a man forsaking at sixty the bachelor freedom in which he had passed so much of his life.

All sorts of fantastic reasons, indeed (if reason can-ever be described as fantastic), had been assigned for this invincible resistance to the charms of the softer sex: he was fettered by a secret marriage, by a romantic engagement which circumstances had not yet allowed him to fulfil; he was an unconfessed member of some monastic order, and sworn to celibacy; he was not the rightful possessor of his ancient title and immense estates, but allowed, for the honour of the family, to retain them on condition of leaving no heirs to his spurious claim. Imagination, in short, was taxed to supply sufficient motives for a resolution so little complimentary to the female world.

Yet where many a great lady had tried her skill and failed, Violet Leycester dreamt of success. Inexperienced as she was in men's ways, how could she guess that the nobleman whose admiration had established her at once as the reigning belle of the season, who himself descended to his door to receive her with almost royal honours, who was wont, with a kind of princely gallantry, to transfer to her breast the choice flower which graced his own button-hole —how, we repeat, could she suppose that all

this devotion was the result of a merely passing fancy, of a caprice which consulted its own immediate gratification far more than the credit or advantage of the momentary favorite? So Violet schemed away, and amused herself with laying out her future plan of life; what entertainments she would give, what fashions she would set, the rivals she would abase, the "friends" she would cut. She never entered Broadwater House without imagining herself its mistress; and, like many industrious castle builders, insensibly adopted the tone of her ideal dignity, assuming, while still Miss Leycester, the importance of a duchess.

In this most impolitic presumption, her foolish mother abetted her. Violet was now, she said, in the sphere for which she was fitted, and she hoped never to see her descend from that elevated position. Several worthy members of their circle, whose houses Miss Violet had been too happy to frequent, were now kept at a freezing distance, and treated with bare civility; while Mrs. Leycester talked openly of the necessity of "weeding her acquaintance." More ill will, therefore, fell to the young lady's share than would, under any circumstances, have attended her sudden

rise so far above her former equals; her pretensions were sneered at by the envious, and regarded with pitying smiles by the good-natured, for they saw that she was staking all her fortune upon one throw, and leaving herself no reserve to fall back upon should that chance fail.

With these views for her own aggrandizement, it may easily be supposed that Violet looked with no favorable eye upon the alliance her elder sister was about to form. She criticised with merciless severity all Sidney's shortcomings, drew ludicrous pictures of Rose's humble *ménage*, and treated both parties with a contemptuous kind of raillery which had well nigh produced a total rupture between the families, and did lead to very unpleasant bickerings, until Hyacinth interfered on his elder sister's behalf, sharply reminding the younger that she was not a peeress yet, and that even a curate in hand was better, perhaps, than two dukes in the bush.

To Mrs. Leycester's credit, it must be stated that she exercised no partiality among the members of her bouquet, giving each its due share of light and air, and equalising as much as possible the social advantages of all. She would not hear of keeping back the younger daughters,

to leave the elder ones in longer possession of the field, and was not to be deterred even by the dread of frightening suitors with a formidable array of sisters-in-law and co-heiresses.

"You have had a fair start," was her reply to the remonstrances of the senior girls at the prospect of a new claimant for admiration. "Other *débutantes* will make their appearance every season to dispute the ground with you, even if I withhold my rosebud; so that delay would injure her chances, without materially increasing yours."

No sooner, accordingly, had Eglantine completed her eighteenth year—her mother consented to wait till then—than she was "brought out" with proper ceremony, and thenceforth took her turn in the gaieties of the season. Three unmarried sisters at once being inadmissible in decent society, Mrs. Leycester insisted upon an equitable division of pleasure, so one of the young ladies, in strict rotation, remained at home.

However fair this arrangement, it was with no small satisfaction that the blooming Eglantine contemplated the speedy removal by marriage of her eldest sister, Rose, as Veronica, the next in

succession to herself, was turned sixteen, bade fair to rival, if not excel the rest in loveliness, and already counted the weeks until the period of initiation arrived. The two little girls, Azalea and Camellia, being but twelve and ten years of age, were too young to have any marked personal characteristics, or any ideas concerning the marriage service, except as connected with new clothes, company, and cake. By them, therefore, the approaching nuptials were hailed with unmitigated delight, as affording an occasion upon which they would be permitted to emerge from the school-room, and play their part in what was going forward.

The ceremony was appointed to take place at Cheltenham, that joint shrine of Hygeia and Hymen, where attendance upon weddings forms a regular item in the morning's amusements; so much so that bashful couples are compelled to creep to the altar at uncomfortable hours to avoid the crowd of amateur "assistants." Rose, however, was one of that less sensitive portion of the community, who think it the height of absurdity to spend so much time and money upon the decoration of their persons, if no one is to witness the result, and would have scorned to

accept any man as a protector who was too nervous to notify his acceptance of the office in the face of the congregation. It was trouble enough, to one of her lazy habits, to get ready for so imposing a spectacle at eleven o'clock in the morning; and bitterly did she inveigh against the legislature for restricting to the forenoon the solemnization of the marriage rite.

"Why on earth should Parliament interfere to fix the hour for a wedding any more than for our meals?" she querulously asked. "I am sure the fashionable dinner system needs reform badly enough, if that signifies anything."

Mr. Aguilar endeavoured to explain that the regulation was no doubt adopted with a view to check clandestine unions by ensuring a certain amount of publicity; but the lady very plausibly argued that, for that purpose it would be sufficient to make sunrise and sunset the *certi de-nique fines quos ultra citraque nequit consistere rectum*.

"There are surely as many people about at three or four o'clock in the afternoon as there are at eight or nine in the morning," persisted she, "and why should narrower limits be assigned for the performance of marriages than of funerals,

I should like to know? It's so vulgar to be scrambling about at that time of day! Not a single concert, *fête*, pic-nic—nothing, in short, that is attended by persons of fashion—ever begins before one o'clock at the soonest, except church on Sunday."

The Reverend Sidney, who daily got together an assembly of fair devotees for matins at seven, a.m., could have dissented from this doctrine, had he not entertained a rooted abhorrence of dissent in any form; but leaving the abstract question of the rights of woman in this particular, he merely impressed upon his affianced bride the necessity of submission to the law as it stood, concluding with a gallant declaration of his eagerness to accept that beloved hand at the earliest practicable moment.

CHAPTER II.

"A man, young lady! lady, such a man
As all the world—Why he's a man of wax.
Nay, he's a flower; in faith a very flower."
ROMEO AND JULIET.

THE wedding took place accordingly at half-past eleven, with all possible pomp and splendour.

"The ceremony usually occurs but once in a life," said Rose; "let it be handsomely done, to talk of hereafter."

The group at the altar certainly presented a very pretty spectacle; so much beauty is rarely seen together. The bride looked ravishing in her white wreath and veil; the two principal bridesmaids, assuming each the hue of her own peculiar flower, were respectively arrayed in pale purple and delicate pink silk, with garlands of violet or wild rose in their crape bonnets. The three juniors were confined to white muslin, Veronica being allowed, in right of age, to surround the interior of her silk bonnet with a circlet of the modest blue blossom

which supplied her name; while the little girls sported rice-straw hats with blue and white feathers.

The bouquets borne by some of the party deserve especial mention, having been conceived and provided by young Mr. Leycester himself. The bride's was composed entirely of roses, of every hue—white, pink, red, black, yellow, and streaked, arranged with considerable taste; her little sisters, in like manner, carried an assemblage of azaleas and camellias, of every attainable colour; while Mrs. Leycester was presented with a floral representative of each of her six daughters, encircling a sprig of white hyacinth in the centre. A similar sprig completed the costume in which he performed, for the first time on any stage, the character of father—a part which the liturgy, oddly enough, reduces to that of a mere “walking gentleman.” For these delicate attentions he was greeted with a chorus of thanks, received a hug from the young fry, and a squeeze of the hand, implying that words were weak, from Rose, who thought it incumbent on her to be tearful and fluttered. Violet calmly smiled her acceptance of the tribute, while Mrs. Leycester first tapped the giver affectionately on the

cheek he bent towards her, and then, with a more genuine impulse, kissed it.

The impulse, we are sorry to say, was often shared by those who did not possess the privilege of giving effect to it, for Hyacinth Leycester was the admiration of all the women, and the envy of all the men, wherever he displayed his countenance. Had he entered the lists at the Elean Callisteia, no other competitor would have stood a chance of the prize. That warlike trophy, however—a complete suit of armour,—would have accorded ill with the temperament of the winner; for Hyacinth's beauty was not of the heroic cast, but of that softer type which the Greek mind loved to pourtray in its Adonis, its Paris, and the ill-fated favourite of Apollo whose name he bore. He had sat to an artist friend in the character of the “amorous Phrygian boy,” and looked just the person to have lured a Helen from home, country, and fame, retaining, meanwhile, so strong a hold upon the affections of a deserted Cœnone, as to render her incapable of surviving his death.

He was now in his twenty-third year, slightly formed, and little, if at all, above the middle height, with light brown hair, dark blue eyes,

and a clear, but not white skin, through which the warm blood showed, like the bloom on a peach. The only son among so many girls (the twin brothers, Narcissus and Valerian, had died in infancy), he had been coddled, indulged, and made much of by both parents and sisters all his life long; and if he had not been thoroughly spoilt in the process, his better qualities had been overlaid by an abundant amount of selfishness, conceit, and frivolity. Few serious attempts had ever been made to cultivate the good that was in him; and the removal, at Mr. Leycester's death, of almost all restraint, had exposed him, while a mere stripling, to temptations which the most carefully nurtured tyros seldom encounter unharmed.

Fortunately, he had inherited his father's refined taste as well as his extravagance, and became simply an exquisite where there was every facility for turning out a *roué*. Brought up, as he had been, among women, he had little chance of escaping the reproach of effeminacy; but that very association had pre-disposed him to vanity rather than to vice, and his habits, if luxurious, were not dissipated. Gifted with an amiable temper, fascinating manners, and that species of

generosity which so often passes for virtue, he enjoyed more extensive popularity among his own sex than usually falls to the lot of a professed *damoiseau*. To the little sarcasms leveled at his graceful fopperies by the larger-whiskered members of his club, the would-be wits of his circle, he opposed only a shield of imperturbable coolness, using, when hard pressed, a tolerably sharp tongue as his best weapon of defence; but it was generally understood that this dainty sprig of fashion, though bearing a very high polish, was of true British oak, and, if he looked too much like a woman, would act, at need, a man's part.

Of his own family, Rose had hitherto been his chief companion. She was of a caressing disposition, and (until she found a new channel for her tenderness) delighted to lavish upon him those little marks of affection which a man (if he is worth anything) loves to receive. His mother was both proud and fond of him, in her own way; and he was too well-bred, if not too dutiful, to exhibit impatience of her shallow intellect and limited range of ideas. He did not impose upon himself the same restraint with regard to Violet and Eglantine, whose unimpas-

sioned temperaments were violently antipathetic to his own. "Both are cold," he was wont to declare: "Violet as the ice, which is susceptible of no impression, Eglantine as the water, which retains none. One cannot always expect both mind and heart; these pretty dolls have neither." To spite them, he patronized Veronica, extolled her charms on all occasions, and scrupulously abstained from treating her as a child, according to their invariable practice. He taught her to ride, took her with him into the Park, "among the men, making her so bold," as Violet said, with calm displeasure; and made a point of dancing with her at juvenile parties, to which she was occasionally allowed to go, in a full-bodied, and *not* full-skirted, frock, with her luxuriant hair confined in a net.

"Who was that pretty girl waltzing with your brother?" somebody had enquired, on some such occasion, of Eglantine.

"That's my sister Veronica; she's not out yet," was the reply, which Hyacinth happened to overhear, and which he never forgot to bring forward at suitable seasons against her. With the juniors altogether he was on very friendly terms, and his visits to the school-room were

more frequent than was advisable, perhaps, for the peace of the governess, who, if she could not flatter herself with the idea of being the object of a romantic attachment on her young "master's" part, at least never endured at his hands the contumelious treatment she now and then experienced from the ladies of the family.

But all this time the bride is waiting to be conducted to the carriage which is to bear her from her home, in a costume so rich, in the popular as well as the stricter sense of the word, that we cannot omit a description of it. She wore a silk dress, shot with green and purple, a crimson velvet mantle, and a primrose bonnet, with a large *blue cactus* in it! With real regret at her loss, Hyacinth handed her to her seat, and retired to make way for the bridegroom, whom he supposed to be following them; when he discovered that gentleman fluttering about the hall after the luggage, which had not yet been arranged in and on the vehicle; so there the newly-married lady sat alone for some minutes, her unveiled countenance exposed to the scrutiny of the crowd which always collects on such occasions, who audibly pronounced her to have "plenty of brass. At length the bag-

gage was properly stowed; Mr. Aguilar, who was only saved by his brother-in-law from appearing at the railway station with a large wedding favour flaunting on his breast, stepped in, and the late Miss Leycester was borne away on a honey-moon trip before proceeding to the scene of her husband's ministerial labours, a retired country village, where she astonished the natives by walking about the muddy roads in black velvet boots, with two chains round her neck. She was just the person to have worn two watches, had fashion in these days sanctioned such an absurdity.

How the time passes with the departed couple, we are, from our position, incapable of determining. We can answer for the survivors, that except the company be tolerably large, and kept together by a pic-nic in the afternoon, or re-assembled at a ball in the evening, ennui becomes the portion of every one of them, individually and collectively. The day has been begun too soon; you cannot, after that disturbance, settle down to your ordinary pursuits, but require some fresh excitement; you are ashamed, in the broad sun-light, of your dress waistcoat, or your white satin shoes (as the case

may be), and confounded at the calm recollection of your morning potations. You feel, in short, as if you had been living too fast, and Time, in revenge, proves itself uncommonly slow.

"After a morning concert there is no resource but the theatre in the evening," said Hyacinth, with a great yawn, when all was over. "What on earth can one do after a wedding?"

"Apply the homœopathic principle," answered Mr. Dacre, the bridegroom's best man, who still lingered, "and get married yourself."

"Oh! yes; it would be so nice to have another marriage," cried the little girls.

"Indeed, it is your turn next, Cinthy; you are the next eldest," remarked Veronica.

"Oh! boys don't reckon for anything in such matters," asserted Eglantine, with a giggle which was one of her least pleasing characteristics.

"*Boys*, forsooth," muttered Hyacinth, indignantly stroking the soft down upon his chin.

Violet smiled to herself, as though she, for one, thought it likely the order of precedence might be set aside, and Mrs. Leycester summed up the question, by saying:

"Eglantine is quite right. There is no hurry

about Cinthy; I would much rather get rid of some of you girls. A widowed mother is naturally anxious to see her daughters assured of protection, in case of her decease," added she, with an eye to Mr. Dacre; "but I am not sure that I approve of a young man marrying too early."

Hyacinth, indeed, furnished the sole exception to his mother's matrimonial creed. For her female progeny any offer was good enough. "Take what you can get, and make the best of it," was her counsel to them; "you can't afford to be nice, and besides, it's all a chance, pick and choose as you will." She would have forced poor Veronica, at sixteen, into a match with a most repulsive admirer, whose person resembled, to use the young lady's expression, "a cod's head and shoulders," had not Hyacinth interposed to prevent the sacrifice; even Rose, he thought, might have done better, but for her mother's perpetual protests against delay. In his case, however, the argument was reversed. The most exaggerated expectations were entertained of his success in the world; no alliance was deemed too splendid for him to achieve, and he was to be the *decus et tutamen* of the family.

How far the young man himself participated in these sentiments, it is difficult to say. He was tolerably confident of his own powers of captivation, and had been told that his face would be his fortune, until he sincerely believed it. This very security, however, made him seem less eager and absorbed in the pursuit, than speculators in wedlock usually are. Though quite as much alive to his interests as his mother could desire, he cleverly avoided the reputation of an adventurer by a dandified insouciance, which was partly natural to him, and partly affected to cover his designs. His method of approach was so different from ordinary tactics that the most wary antagonists were thrown off their guard.

Disdaining the hackneyed manœuvres by which it is usual to court favour with the fair sex, he played a more subtle game, and practised with rare skill the delicate art of appearing artless. Fastidious, moreover, in all his tastes, he escaped the common error of indiscriminate gallantry, and if he never dreamt for an instant of wasting his artillery upon a penniless beauty, it was not every heiress that he condescended to besiege. The shrewdest chaperones hardly knew what to

make of him: he was too careless to excite alarm, too handsome to be trusted, and too saucy to be scared away. Where there was no attack there could be no defence; and yet a needy youngster, with birth, good looks, and a certain piquancy of manner to recommend him, belonged too decidedly to "the dangerous classes," to be viewed without suspicion.

"Do tell me now about that young man," said Lady Wauchope, a matron of high renown, to Mr. Dacre, as they were going down to dinner together one day. "He is quite a puzzle to me, with his airs and impudence. You gentlemen soon find out these things, I know. Is it true that he has absolutely nothing?"

"Indeed, Ma'am, to the best of my belief, when our friend yonder grew up to man's estate, it was all the estate he had, or is likely to have," replied the oracle of the clubs, with befitting gravity.

"He is certainly not an *eligible* acquaintance under those circumstances," pursued her ladyship. "Is he *safe*? for he has an *ingénue* kind of way with him, that almost defies my penetration. I mean, is he the harmless kind of person one can admit as part of one's *cordon* at balls and

public places, without risking any further advances, or must one be on one's guard against him as a detrimental?"

"Where Lady Wauchope's sagacity is at fault," answered Mr. Dacre, "it would be presumptuous in me to decide. I can only say, borrowing a phrase from the present sultry season, that in my opinion Cinthy Leycester is far too knowing a dog to be allowed to range among young ladies unmuzzled."

Mr. Dacre himself, it will be remarked, was evidently considered "safe" by the fair inquisitress, who thus candidly sought information of him. A man of middle age, though the balance still inclined rather to the side of youth, of distinguished appearance and connexions, with a clear intellect and a touch of sarcastic humour, doubtful morals and a simple competence, he had long been set down as a determined bachelor, and was frequently admitted as a kind of consulting partner in those speculations of which he had ceased to be an object. He passed his life in the resorts of fashion, had the entrée of the best houses, and was well received every where; and thus picked up a store of information about every body, which rendered him invaluable as a

coadjutor, though he was a sort of game not worth bagging on his own account.

None but novices or desperate sportswomen, at least, sought to entangle him in the matrimonial noose: though unless the reports of his *bonnes fortunes* were grossly exaggerated, he had not altogether lost his attractiveness to the votaries of a more contraband pastime. It amused him excessively to lend himself to the schemes of such matrons as Lady Wauchope and Mrs. Leycester, the latter of whom, by the bye, not being over sharp-sighted, had not quite given up the hope of securing him as a son-in-law, all objections to the contrary notwithstanding. To the former he long remained chief confidential adviser, until, having in a fit of mischief, introduced a younger son to her as the future head of a noble family, he forfeited her good graces, and was banished from her councils for life.

Even now the faithless villain laughs in his sleeve, thinking how he will excite young Leycester's hilarity at the club to-morrow morning, by describing that sagacious lady's anxieties concerning him: all heedless of which, Hyacinth ate his dinner and pursued his own plans.

“Would you mind changing seats with me?”

he said to the lady whom he was commissioned to hand down, as they were taking their places at the table. "I hate a cane chair."

His companion looked up at him in some surprise; but so bright a pair of eyes beamed down on her, that she thought fit to take the strange petition in good part, and (not having on a velvet dress) submitted to the desired alteration. "There's a good creature," was his meed of applause: "I see we shall get on very well together."

During the first two courses, however, the intimacy did not make much progress. Leycester bestowed his most winning smiles upon the old lady on his left, who, having had some misunderstanding with his mother, received his civilities with scant cordiality, and resisted, as long as she was able, his irresistible fascinations. This conquest fairly completed, the victor whetted his sword for new triumphs.

"You have not addressed a word to me yet," he complained to his neglected partner. "What pleasure can you find in talking to that red-whiskered fellow on the other side of you?"

"I might retort the question, in a modified form," answered Mrs. Delamere; "for this is, I

believe, the first time you have condescended to open your lips for my benefit."

"Because I did not know what to say to you," returned the gentleman, with an air of engaging *naiveté*. "I was trying to think of an original remark."

"Indeed! I hope your efforts have been crowned with success; originality is a rare merit in dinner table talk."

Assuming the tone of one who is about to lay down some new and important proposition, Hyacinth turned to her after a moment's pause, and ejaculated :—

"It is very hot—may I have your fan?" he added, his countenance reflecting the merriment which beamed from Mrs. Delamere's, at this ludicrous disappointment of her highly-raised expectations; and without waiting for permission, he took up that exclusively feminine appendage, and fanned himself with perfect complacency.

A commonplace woman would have been confounded and displeased at his eccentric proceedings, resenting such departure from the ordinary routine; Mrs. Delamere was not a commonplace woman, and rather relished the novelty. The arch glance with which she replied that

greater coolness was surely not attainable than that her neighbour already displayed, convinced him that he was duly appreciated; and he devoted himself thenceforth to the task of proving that all his strength did not lay in his singularity. Mrs. Delamere was quite sorry when the time came to part from so entertaining a companion.

After dinner there was dancing, in which, to her surprise, Mr. Leycester did not join, but stood in the door-way, caressing one of his long *favoris*.

"Don't you dance?" she enquired when he moved her way.

"The hint is a very broad one," returned our exquisite; "and I have no objection to stand up with you, if you wish it."

"What nonsense," cried the widow. "As if I wanted to exhibit my steps! There are plenty of young ladies in the room."

"I detest girls; give me a woman," said Hyacinth, sinking into the vacant seat beside her.

"Bravo, Cinthy," whispered Mr. Dacre, as he passed behind them.

"Call the polka an amusement!" pursued Leycester: "I consider it very violent exercise,

like cricket, fit for lawyers and painters, and people who lead a sedentary life, and whose muscles need relaxing. Besides it puts one in a heat, which is highly unbecoming. Would you move a little further? Thank you. This sofa is very comfortable. The Turks certainly understand the science of luxury better than we do. Their furniture presents every facility to the lounging; and they pay persons to caper for them. I would not undertake to whirl about for half an hour together, in yonder frantic manner, for any sum short of a thousand pounds."

"That is setting a high price upon your exertions," remarked Mrs. Delamere. "If it would cost so much to hire you as a partner for so small a portion of one evening, what amount, I wonder, would be required to purchase you out and out."

"As a sleeping partner you mean," rejoined Hyacinth, glancing at her demurely, under his long eye-lashes. "My views are moderate. You see what I am, and I might almost say, you see what I have, for my funds are mainly invested in ready-made linen and drapery. This gold guard chain, with no watch at the end of it, and this steel-bead purse, with no money in it, re-

present my stock of the precious metals: the lady therefore must bring the capital into the concern. Let her *have*—for in fact that verb comes first in the grammar—a house in town, a box at the opera, a French cook, a carriage, two or three saddle-horses, with two or three thousand a year to keep them up; let her *be* a gentlewoman, under forty, not scraggy, not sallow, not a shrew, and I am content.”

“ What moderation!” exclaimed Mrs. Delamere; “ I am astonished you did not specify youth, rank, beauty, and talent among the personal qualifications of your consort, adding a country mansion, a yacht, a pack of hounds, and a seat in Parliament, to her possessions.”

“ Your astonishment proceeds from an entire misapprehension of my character and tastes,” observed Leycester, with imperturbable gravity. “ Youth and beauty are not requisite on both sides, and I am young enough and handsome enough to dispense with those attributes in my future spouse. I should not like her to be much my superior in station, and clever women are generally great bores. As to your list of more tangible attractions, what is a yacht to a man who is always sea-sick, or a kennel to one who

seldom hunts? I should ruin the shape of my mouth by yawning at your country house, for I don't know wheat from turnips, and find no amusement in dragging a gun about all day, wearing clumsy boots, and handling poor dead birds in an unpleasant state of moisture; while from a seat in Parliament (especially in the new House of Commons!), from a servile canvass and a noisy hustings, from prosy debates and dull committees, from interrupted dinners and slumbers on a bench, from worry and business, strife and speech-making, I fervently pray, the Lord deliver me! You are not going?"

"I fear I must; my carriage has been announced some time."

"From this readiness to abandon my society, you are not, I conclude, disposed to make an offer for me?" said Hyacinth, rising also.

"You are too expensive a luxury at present," answered Mrs. Delamere laughing. "Perhaps you will be obtainable at a great reduction bye-and bye."

"Don't flatter yourself," returned Leycester; "I shall increase in value yearly, like wine or the Sybilline volumes. If I hand you downstairs, will you give me a lift in your

carriage? Coach-hire is ruinous, and I abhor cabs."

"How is it that so fine a gentleman does not keep one of his own?" asked the widow, when they were seated in the vehicle.

"That is a question I often put to myself," was the reply. "My limited finances scarcely furnish a valid excuse, for the smartest turn-out I know is kept by a man with just eighty pounds a year. The fact is that I was impregnated in my childhood with some superstitious notions about integrity, and so forth, of which I have striven in vain to get rid. Absurd as it may seem to you, I cannot bear the sight of an unpaid bill, and am irrational enough to think credit discreditable. What's that fellow stopping for? I don't live here."

"But I do," urged the mistress of the equipage timidly. "If you will let me get out here, he shall set you down afterwards wherever you wish."

"I hope you are sincere in the proposal," said the young man, as he deposited her in the hall, "for I mean to accept it. I don't want your footman though. There, pull up the shutters, my man; I shall travel the rest of the way outside."

So saying, he saluted the lady, mounted the box, put a few questions concerning the stable arrangements, and arriving at his own door, tossed half-a-crown to the coachman, and went in to bed.

He was asleep before Mrs. Delamere.

CHAPTER III.

"A vain, giddy, shallow, humorous youth."

KING HENRY V.

FROM the reports of the Registrar-General, we deduce the singular fact, that of all the widows in the British Islands, who annually re-enter the bonds of wedlock, a large proportion select help-mates considerably younger than themselves. Whether, in their matured wisdom, they deliberately act upon that principle of contrariety which is said to produce the happiest results in matrimony, it seems tolerably certain that every one admires in another the attribute in which he is most deficient himself. Hence, it is alleged, women so highly esteem courage; hence, it may be, men lay so much stress upon chastity. From the same cause, no doubt, a distinguished belle prefers a plain consort; a man of powerful intellect marries a simpleton; one of diminutive stature aspires to a Juno; while the companion Jove sighs for a pocket Venus. Thus, also, the

city heiress aims at rank, the heir of an ancient title culls its partner from the stage; and thus, it would appear, the elderly, above all things, appreciate youth. The single exception seems to be in the case of money, the possessor of which, absurdly disregarding that freedom of choice which wealth bestows, often exacts a corresponding degree of affluence in the other party to the contract.

It was not, however, simply on account of his juvenility that Mrs. Delamere, a well-jointed widow of four and thirty years, looked with a favourable eye upon Mr. Hyacinth Leycester. Her fancy was taken captive by his uncommon beauty, his melodious voice, and the ineffable grace with which he uttered his quaintest speeches; while, to her dazzled sight, there was something attractive in the eccentricity of his behaviour, contrasting, as it did, so strongly with the strain of adulation in which she was usually addressed. It was quite refreshing to meet with some one bold enough to differ from her in opinion; Hyacinth's freedom was better calculated to please her than the most scrupulous politeness, as he, perhaps, very well knew.

The widow could talk of no one else the next

morning at breakfast, and was half angry because she could not make her niece view matters in the same light. Deprived of the charm with which the speaker's presence invested them, his words,

"Like shells which thro' the waves look bright,
But cold and dull are cast on shore,"

seemed to Miss Wentworth a mere tissue of impertinence and conceit, and she declared that her aunt must have been bewitched to find anything agreeable in him.

"Perhaps I was," said Mrs. Delamere laughing. "You must wait till you see him, Mary, before you form your judgment. I dare say he will call in the course of the day."

"Not a doubt of that," returned the younger lady. "It strikes me that the request for a lift was a mere *ruse* to discover where you lived. He will not fail to improve such an opportunity of cultivating your acquaintance."

"There you certainly do him injustice, Mary," cried the widow. "He is the last man in the world to pay court to any one, and if he cared to know my residence, he could easily have ob-

tained the information from our hostess, or any of the company last night."

Miss Wentworth's calculation, and Mrs. Delamere's secret hope proved equally unfounded. Mr. Leycester's card did not appear on the hall table that day. The next place in which his admirer beheld him was the Park, where he was mounted on a superb mare, that appeared but half broken in, for it was curveting and prancing about, much to the inconvenience of everybody within reach of its heels, but without any detriment, apparently, to the sublime composure of its rider. When he had allowed her time sufficient to remark his admirable horsemanship, he condescended to recognise her livery, made a bow such as those wherewith a late noble viceroy was wont to ravish the hearts of his Irish subjects, and brought his rebellious steed into a line with her carriage.

"Your self-denial, I perceive, does not extend to horses," remarked Mrs. Delamere, after a few prefatory observations.

"Ah, a splendid animal, isn't she?" returned Hyacinth, drawing off a little to exhibit her beauties. "Dacre won her the other day of young Lord Etheredge, and as with him riding

is only a fashionable method of locomotion, not a pastime, a delight, a refined sort of intoxication, I have undertaken to tame down the creature's spirits, and bring her into proper training for an equestrian of our friend Dacre's calibre."

" You have certainly a very promising pupil," said Mrs. Delamere, trying to assume the air of a connoisseur in horseflesh, as ladies are rather prone to do. " She seems to have a fine springy pace."

" You should see her in full play," cried Leycester, in a tone of more animation than he usually indulged. " Shall I put her over these iron railings, or let her take fright at something and run away? Without that excuse, you know, it is unlawful to shake the nerves of her Majesty's subjects, by galloping at the rate of more than ten miles an hour."

" A pretty preparation for Mr. Dacre," replied the widow, laughing. " But look, here is some one run away with in sober earnest."

A singular scene presented itself. A lady, young, handsome, and dressed in the first style of fashion, seated in a low phaeton, with a groom behind her, was endeavouring in vain to resume the mastery over two spanking horses, which

were dashing through the throng of carriages with headlong speed. Powerless to arrest them, she just managed to guide their course, retaining her self-possession admirably, though a destructive collision seemed every moment inevitable. Among all the crowd of gentlemen on the spot, not one moved to her assistance. Yes, one! The languid Hyacinth set spurs to his horse, overtook and passed the little vehicle, then wheeling round just in front of it, caught one of the runaways' heads with a bold and skilful hand, and pulled him up short in mid career. The more unsophisticated set up something like a cheer, the better-informed looked smilingly on while Hyacinth guided his struggling captives to a comparatively quiet spot, and assisted their mistress to alight. Of all the carriages which encumbered the Ring that afternoon, not one was opened to receive the rescued fair.

A twinge of unwonted consciousness heightened the colour in a cheek which fear had not been able (for more than one reason) to blanch.

"How will you proceed homewards?" asked Leycester, with some embarrassment. "I scarcely know what plan to propose, but you may command my services."

"Thank you," returned the lady, carelessly; "I shall return as I came. My horses will go steadily enough now, I dare say."

"You had better, at any rate, entrust the reins to your groom. Your hand may not grasp them quite so firmly as usual, and can never have a very strong hold," said Hyacinth, looking admiringly at it as it rested on the arm he extended to aid its owner in regaining her seat.

"You do not offer to accompany me yourself," said she, in a low tone of mingled reproach and seduction.

"The proposal might be misconstrued," returned the young man, in a correspondingly subdued voice.

The lady bit her lip, and bowing her farewell, was driven off without further parley. Hyacinth re-mounted, and rode away in the opposite direction, pondering deeply upon some of the anomalies in our social code.

He had to encounter no little raillery at the clubs on his chivalrous espousal of an "unprotected female's" cause.

"I am concerned to have missed the scene, Leycester," said Mr. Dacre. "They tell me your performance was worthy of Astley's."

"To think of Cinthy turning knight-errant," cried another, "and breaking a lance too in honour of Grace More."

"It was all very well for an old muff, like Sir Roger de Coverley, to be so taken in by a distressed damsel, but for a man about town of your standing, Leycester, such greenness was astounding," added a third.

"Why, you don't suppose he knew no better?" chimed in a fourth. "I thought it was just of a piece with his usual impudence to do what nobody else would have ventured to do."

"Come, tell us now, old fellow, didn't you know Grace More was graceless?" said the wit of the party.

"I knew she was a woman," was the only reply Hyacinth vouchsafed to these and many similar interrogatories.

"What do you suppose ladies of exalted virtue will say to you, mon cher?" Dacre asked, with affected gravity.

"Can't tell, I'm sure, though I have enjoyed the opportunity of listening to the remarks of so many gentlemen answering that description," retorted Leycester, drily, as he took a final

survey of his person in the mirror, before sallying into the street.

We are able to give the opinion of two ladies at least, of average reputation. Violet Leycester, who witnessed the occurrence from the carriage of a female scion of the house of Broadwater, was scandalized at her brother's exertions on behalf of "a wretch," as she pronounced the frail Grace to be; it being, no doubt, conducive to the furtherance of the public morality that dames of tarnished character should be allowed to dash their brains out, or break their necks, whenever the course of providence should so order it.

"Lady Maria was quite shocked to see you talking to that person," she continued; "and, indeed, Hyacinth, I blushed for you."

"A most sensible arrangement, Letta; it saved me the trouble, and was, I dare say, very becoming to you," was all the reply her admonitions extorted from the imperturbable sinner.

Mrs. Delamere had also been an interested spectator of the scene, admiring equally the promptitude of his measures, the skill with which he effected his purpose, and the reserve of his subsequent demeanour.

"A professed man of fashion," she thought, "who obeys the generous impulse of his nature, undeterred by the selfish fear of compromising himself by this or that particular display of it, must be worth something. There are only two classes of persons thus reckless of the consequences of their actions: those who are so hardened in vice as to set public opinion at defiance, and they whose minds are too innocent, whose motives are too pure to suggest a dread of the world's sneer. Hyacinth Leycester is surely too young to have reached the former stage."

Such was the view of the subject she laboured to impress upon Miss Wentworth, whom she found on this occasion more disposed to agree with her than before.

"Care for a woman always shows well in a man," was her dictum, "and in a young man especially, I would rather see the heart warm than the head cool; but I hope your hero did not mean to express an ostentatious disregard of the proprieties of life, by exhibiting himself as the champion of so notorious a character."

"I only trust, my dear, that if you are ever placed in circumstances of similar peril, your

deliverance may not be delayed until the deliverer has satisfied himself of your moral impeccability. But you are evidently prejudiced against my hero, as you call Mr. Leycester. I can only say, as before, wait till you see him."

Mary smiled to herself, thinking it was possible to be prejudiced in favour of a person, as well as against him. Fortune soon gave her an opportunity of exercising her own judgment upon Hyacinth's merits. She went with Mrs. Delamere to a small evening party at a house where he and his mother were among the dinner guests. The Misses Leycester were announced shortly after, and Mary had full leisure, before the gentlemen made their appearance, to admire and criticise Violet's listless hauteur, and Eglantine's equally unmeaning vivacity. Their mother she thought pretty, but frivolous, and somewhat deficient in the matronly dignity befitting the chaperone of more than one full-grown daughter. She was not a little curious to see the son and brother, of whom her imagination was busied in composing a fancy portrait from the materials before her eyes.

First of his sex, he emerged from the dining-room, and entering with his wonted nonchalance

that awful circle of petticoats which presents so appalling an aspect to many a tyro in society, made his way up to the looking-glass and the mistress of the house, and commenced a conversation with the one about the other.

" You ladies have greatly the advantage of us on these occasions," said he, in his languishing voice. " You get half an hour to re-arrange your tresses, and shake out your skirts, so that by the time we see you again you all look as fresh as when you first came. Now, we poor fellows have no chance of finding out before we rejoin our charmers whether our ties set straight and our love-locks are in battle array, unless we are prepared to accept the title of a coxcomb, by conducting the examination in this public fashion," suiting the action to the word.

" Would you have a mirror down stairs, as well as in the drawing-room?" asked the hostess, one of those persons who have only one idea upon any subject, and whose idea of furniture was derived from Gillow.

" Certainly," replied Leycester; " why, at our clubs we have glasses on the stairs, ' that we may see our shadows as we pass.' "

" La! do you really? But it is always proper

I thought to have a large picture over the mantelpiece in a dining-room."

"It may be proper, but it isn't pleasant," returned Hyacinth. "I would rather look at my own face than at a grim old portrait of a gentleman holding a snuff box, or a prim likeness of a lady with her finger between the leaves of a book which she was never guilty of reading."

"You are the most conceited person, Mr. Leycester! But talking of glasses, I often wonder you don't wear one stuck in the corner of your eye, as so many young men of fashion do."

"Low, ma'am, very low. Every puppy now-a-days mounts a lorgnette; but I, who go the whole dog, scorn such conventional artifices. I am thankful to say I don't perceive any indication of dimness in my eyes yet, do you, Mrs. Delamere?" said Hyacinth, suddenly turning upon that lady a pair as radiant as sapphires.

Mary could not listen further to the conversation, for her attention was claimed by one of the other gentlemen, who had by this time joined the party. She could observe, however, that her aunt did not appear at all disposed to resent the young man's somewhat tardy recognition, and that he bore little resemblance

to any member of his family there present; his cheek boasting a warmer tint, while his bright glance betrayed a keen relish of his own absurdities, incompatible with the assumption that they were the genuine offspring of either conceit or emptiness. With all his talk, a discriminating observer could see that he was not in reality half so much *occupé de sa personne* as his fair relatives, or, indeed, as many of those male critics who passed the severest judgment on him. In point of dress, too, he by no means came up to Mary's pre-conceived notion of him as an extra-geous dandy. It was *soigné*, and nothing more: exquisitely fine linen, admirably got up; a black gauze neckerchief not too stiffly tied; and a dark cloth or cashmere waistcoat, embroidered in silk of the same colour, with coral buttons, composed a toilette to which the purest taste could take no exception; the very refinement of vanity teaching him that the tailor's art was needed only to display, not to decorate, his faultless figure.

To a musical ear, moreover, such a voice, Mary confessed to herself, might make any nonsense agreeable; she was not sorry when her companion, after imparting to her his private

opinion that Leycester was a confounded prig, moved away, and left her at liberty to pursue her study of the maligned individual in question.

Mrs. Delamere apparently had intimated her readiness to make the acquaintance of Mrs. Leycester and her daughters, a proposal at which the young man's eyes sparkled, with triumph, Dacre would have said—with filial gratification, as it seemed to the widow. His reply, however, betrayed no particular eagerness to avail himself of the flattering suggestion.

“ My sister Violet, perhaps, will hardly care to know you, unless you are related to some one whose name is to be found in the Peerage; but my mother, I am sure, will be proud of the introduction; and if you give balls, Eglantine will hail it with delight.”

“ She is, then, a more enthusiastic votary of Terpsichore than yourself?” observed Mrs. Delamere, smiling.

“ You may well call it enthusiasm,” returned Hyacinth. “ Dancing is with her the great end and object of existence, her only pursuit, her sole ambition. She performed a *pas seul* at the dancing academy before she could speak plain,

and has no wish to take any steps in life but what she there learnt; I verily believe she would be willing to die on the eve of her bridal, like poor Giselle, if she could thereby secure the Wilis' privilege of executing a ghostly ballet every moonlight night over their own graves. Dora Copperfield's little French song, about the impossibility of ever leaving off that bewitching exercise, expresses her sentiments to a nicety."

" You are severe upon Miss Eglantine," remarked Mrs. Delamere. " What is your opinion of the work you have just quoted?" she continued, seeing that he appeared in no hurry to rise and perform the ceremony of introduction.

" Excuse me, pray," answered Leycester. " As the author is not a friend of mine, I have no temptation to be severe upon him; and if I did not find fault with his production, you would think meanly of my critical judgment."

" My niece, Miss Wentworth;" Hyacinth inclined his eyelids in her honour; " and I have never been able to come to a satisfactory conclusion on its merits," pursued Mrs. Delamere. " She rates it very highly; I find in it the writer's usual sin of over-elaboration."

" The parts I think so admirable," observed

Miss Wentworth, "are in the earlier chapters of the work. The description there given of a child's notions and observations is marvellously accurate, causing one's own vague remembrances of that distant time to stand out suddenly before one in vivid distinctness."

"I was relieved to find," observed Mrs. Delamere, "that he avoided the rock upon which I at one time feared he would split, of making Agnes sacrifice herself to an exaggerated idea of filial duty by a marriage with that odious Uriah. We have had, methinks, somewhat too much of that sort of false sentiment upon the subject of matrimony. I doubt if a woman has more right to commit perjury at the altar, by swearing to love and honour a man whom she utterly abhors and despises, than she possesses on less important occasions."

"There is another and a less obvious error of the same class exposed in the book," said Leycester, "and that is the vulgar notion that equality of years is the grand essential to wedded happiness. I heartily agree with Dickens that 'there is no disparity like uncongeniality of mind and purpose.' If a woman has sufficient beauty, sweetness, intellect to attract my prefe-

rence, what do I care how old she is? I admired, loved, esteemed her, before I enquired her exact age. Why should the knowledge of that fact alter my sentiments? And the same rule, of course, applies to both sexes. If the one is young enough, or old enough, as the case may be, to be agreeable in the eyes of the other, they have no call to set about examining their baptismal registers. Doesn't that seem to you a rational view of the matter, Miss Wentworth?"

He addressed Mary, somewhat to her surprise, for his glance was bent upon the widow, who sat thoughtfully gazing at her fan. Thus called upon, however, she answered that, without denying the plausibility of his argument, she had been accustomed to consider a great dissimilarity of age undesirable in wedlock, on account of the want of sympathy between persons at different stages of existence.

"But too close a parity of disposition is no reckoned conducive to wedded bliss," argued Hyacinth.

"Of disposition, perhaps not," returned Mary, "in tastes and sentiments a certain resemblance is undoubtedly indispensable. The young love excitement, the old desire repose; how can both

be gratified together? If one prefer a town, the other a country life; one crave society, the other solitude; one be possessed by the spirit of locomotion, the other unwilling to quit the domestic hearth—what kind of satisfaction can they derive from their union?"

"And yet, sound as that theory appears," interposed Mrs. Delamere, "some of the most successful practical experiments with which I am acquainted, have been conducted upon the opposite principle. Look at the Abercrombies for instance, Mary, a score of years at least between them, and where will you find a better-assorted pair?"

"What is still more strange," added Hyacinth, "is that the chances of felicity, are absolutely increased, when the excess is on the female side. You may laugh, Miss Wentworth, I am aware the opinion is heterodox; but as facts are more convincing than words, I can only tell you that a young fellow who was at Eton with me, has just married a lady full seventeen years his senior; and a happier couple I never wish to see."

After which climax he rose, lounged across the room to his mother, brought her back on his

arm, and depositing her in the chair he had lately occupied, left her to cultivate the acquaintance, for which he had prepared the ground.

Mrs. Delamere did not relish the exchange. Hyacinth was not very profound, but the shallow stream of his mother's thoughts did not even sparkle as it ran. The physical causes which reconciled male hearers to her fluent and always well-bred gossip, lost much of their effect upon an auditress of her own sex. Indeed, Mrs. Delamere had an uncomfortable, though vague impression that she herself in her silver grey silk, with a tasteful little combination of lace and flowers, which might or might not represent that badge of maturity, a cap, on her head, did not show to advantage beside her fair neighbour, who, with her blond ringlets, and her muslin flounces, must appear the younger of the twain, in a pair of blue eyes which were now and then turned that way. It had just occurred to her to ask herself of what importance to her was the opinion upon that point, of the owner of the said eyes, when a move was made to the piano, and Miss Wentworth being requested to perform, her aunt took the opportunity of quitting her seat,

and bore her company to the other end of the room.

Later in the evening, the widow was prevailed upon to sit down to the instrument. Though not entitled to rank as a musician of the first order, her singing was excellent in its way. She possessed a voice of small compass, but of singular sweetness, the higher notes especially having a silvery tone which lingered long in the hearer's memory. She had been well taught the mechanical part of her art, and knew how to make the most of her somewhat limited powers.

The grand type of the school to which Mrs. Delamere belonged, is Sontag, the Pearl of Song, with her neat, crisp, delicate, bird-like warbling, as distinguished from the dramatic energy, the sonorous intonation of the queenly Grisi; and the mellifluous richness of the deep-voiced Alboni. (Harmonious trio! what "pleasures of memory" are awakened by the mere mention of your names!) When, therefore, we state that Mrs. Delamere did her best, we mean to imply that she did a great deal, and very genuine was the applause that greeted her efforts.

"Oh, charming, charming, is it not, Mr. Leycester?" said the hostess, appealing to the occu-

pant of an easy chair in close proximity to the piano.

"I dare say it was," replied a voice from its luxurious depths: "but I never listen to singing that is not addressed to my particular ear."

Mrs. Lacy called him "a strange creature," and passed on. Mrs. Delamere resumed her gloves, looking slightly vexed, as Hyacinth observed from under his drooping eyelids. Not long after, her carriage was announced; she had to pass him to convey the intimation to her niece.

"You are going," said he, rising as if to facilitate, while in reality he impeded her progress; "I wish I were, but I am on duty to night and my sisters never think they have had enough of a party. I have a great mind to go and walk up and down the street until they are ready to start."

"You don't intend to ask me for a lift then, this evening," said Mrs. Delamere, relaxing.

"Shall I never find any one to appreciate me?" exclaimed Hyacinth, clapping his hand—a very fit hand for the purpose—to his forehead with a theatrical air; "can you really suppose me capable of doing such a thing twice?"

"You are indeed so eccentric a personage, that I hardly know what answer I may expect to the

request I have to make, namely that you would honour my poor house with your presence, the next night but one, when I receive a few friends. Mrs. Leycester has promised to waive ceremony, and give me the pleasure of her company. May I hope to see you also?"

"What attractions do you hold out?" enquired Hyacinth, with all the coolness imaginable.

"From a remark I casually overheard, I fear that some good music will be no great inducement to you," replied Mrs. Delamere, with an arch glance, and a scarcely perceptible increase of colour.

The exquisite pursed up his lips to conceal a smile of satisfaction at the manifest importance she attached to his opinion, and taking his tablets out of his pocket, answered dubiously:

"I dare say I am engaged, but I'll make a note of it. Which day did you name?"

"What dainty tablets!" cried Mrs. Delamere; "they must certainly be a lady's gift."

"You are right," he said, putting them into her hands.

They had evidently cost money, and were quite new; the single word "Grazia" engraved on the cover furnished no clue to the giver.

"You remember the last time we met in the Park?" continued the young man with a sudden change of look and tone.

Reading assent in his companion's countenance, he went on :

"When I got home from the opera last night, my servant said to me: 'Did you lose a pocket book in Hyde Park on Saturday, sir?' 'Very likely,' returned I, 'I'm always losing something.' 'Because, sir, a man brought this here little parcel, and said as how it was picked up on the spot where you had been seen standing after pulling up some horses that had run away.' 'Oh, give it here,' said I, 'I dare say it's all right.' This was the contents of the parcel. I asked him the next morning what sort of person it was who brought it, and he said apparently a gentleman's groom, but he did not state who had sent him."

The widow comprehended at once that Grazia stood for both Grace and thanks.

"Poor Grace," she murmured, half unconsciously.

Hyacinth just pressed the tips of her fingers as he received back his property.

"All other faults may *not* pass for virtues in her, for she is not ungrateful," he said.

CHAPTER IV.

“Give me a youth, that’s hardy, brave, and kind,
His honest face the index of his mind.”

DODSLEY.

“WELL, Mary, what do you think of him?” was Mrs. Delamere’s eager question, as soon as she and her niece were fairly settled in the carriage on their way homewards.

Miss Wentworth was not enthusiastic in his praise. He had not taken much notice of her, in the first place; though she did not advert to that fact in pronouncing judgment upon him. Good looks she could not deny him, and a certain fascination of manner; but his was not the style of beauty she particularly admired in a man (no *young* ladies ever did, Mrs. Delamere opined; it was too much like their own); nor could the plea of originality excuse, in her eyes, his frequent, not to say habitual deviation from the strict line of politeness; in proof whereof she adduced his speech about the music, which,

made in her aunt's inevitable hearing, appeared to her positively rude.

Mrs. Delamere urged in his defence that whatever licence he allowed his tongue, he was never wanting in the substantial requirements of courtesy.

"And even that disregard of etiquette is only manifested towards those who can well dispense with its observance," she continued. "If he was indifferent to my singing, did you notice how studiously attentive he was to the poor little governess, when she was called upon to occupy the music stool? There was at least kind feeling in that."

"It appears very uncharitable to detract from the merit of a good action," replied Mary laughing, "but I cannot help suspecting that Mr. Leycester's condescension to the governess, like Sterne's liberality to the donkey, arose less from a sense of pleasure in benevolence, than from a love of singularity. Give me a man who is polite at all times and to all persons, not one who is affable only by fits and starts."

The two ladies seemed as little likely to come to an agreement upon this point as the two celebrated disputants concerning the colour of the

chameleon; nor was it, perhaps, altogether expedient that they should. If Venus had been the only goddess in repute among the heathen world, who would have gained a livelihood by making silver shrines for Diana? And if the whole female sex bowed down before one divinity, what would become of the rest of mankind?

If Mrs. Delamere was anxious to produce a favorable impression upon her new acquaintances, the fates were propitious to her on the night of her party. Her guests, though not ranking so high in the social scale as the courtly frequenters of Broadwater House, were sufficiently select to thaw the ice in which the fair Violet usually encased herself, while Mrs. Leycester was charmed to add so elegant a mansion to her visiting list. Hyacinth, too, was on his best behaviour, and did not yawn once during a series of performances, which, though excellent in themselves, must have been somewhat trying to one with his very limited powers of endurance.

The main feature of the entertainment was the harp-playing of two accomplished amateurs, who enjoyed no small celebrity in private circles. We will not pause here to enquire into the means by which a reputation of this kind is established,

real talent being most decidedly not the invincible basis. Suffice it to say, that while Miss Rachel evinced in her very attitude a genuine feeling for her art, and drew sweet tones from her instrument with the pleased aspect of a young mother calling forth the nascent intelligence of her child, Miss Rebecca grasped the strings with an energy that threatened the overthrow of her capacious person, and made her hearers imagine that she was emulating the well-known feat of the Minstrel Boy, who "tore its chords in sunder." Bang went her fat hands on each side of the devoted harp, as if she were going through a few preliminary evolutions in boxing; leaf after leaf of the music was turned over, and still no termination appeared to those brilliant arpeggios. The announcement of some new comers would, it was faintly hoped, bring her efforts to a close; but no, she only took advantage of the opportunity to re-settle herself comfortably on her seat, and went to work with fresh vigour on variation the eleventh.

The piece, however, did come to an end at last; not long after which epoch, Mrs. Delamere, stepping out of the drawing-room to give some directions to her servants, discovered Mr.

Leycester on the landing-place, leaning over the balustrade. He turned round as she pronounced his name.

"Did you think I was looking out for the refreshment trays," he asked, "or are you come to share my quiet retreat?"

"I fear you were bored within; Miss Myers' fantasia was certainly of the longest," said his hostess, apologetically.

"I thought those people had hung up their harps upon the trees somewhere," observed Hyacinth. "It was a great pity that fat Jewess ever took hers down again."

"Yet her execution is really very wonderful."

"Wonderful, yes," assented he; "so Miss Wauchope yonder is wonderfully ugly, and perhaps you may consider me wonderfully impudent; but in point of fact, we do not admire every thing we wonder at, in spite of the abstract agreement of the words. I have not suffered so much since the last Eistedvodd. By all that's incredible, there she goes again! I'm very sorry, my dear Madam, I cannot stand that tinkle any longer; I shall begin to howl like a nervous dog. Carry my last sigh to my

mother, and bid her not to weep for her lost boy."

"Are you really going?" said Mrs. Delamere, as he prepared to descend the stairs.

"*Convien partir*," he replied, passing by an easy transition from speech to song. He had gone down a step or two, but suddenly returning, said: "If I call to-morrow, between two and three, will you sing me, 'With verdure clad,' to myself alone?"

Receiving the required consent, he waved his hand in token of farewell, and disappeared from the scene. When Mrs. Delamere re-entered the drawing-room, she glanced round to see if any of the lights had gone out, the apartment looked so much darker than before.

"An ingenious way of inviting himself to lunch," said Miss Wentworth, when she heard of the appointment; but Hyacinth did not arrive until long after that meal had been discussed, and refused to partake of any refreshment. His object was attained in securing free access to a house where he wished to establish himself upon an intimate footing, and where he began to conceive hopes of being one day received as a permanent inmate. Mary declared he scru-

tinized all the furniture with the air of an appraiser, or an intending purchaser; but she was prevented from watching the progress of an acquaintance so oddly commenced, by a summons to attend the wedding of an old school-fellow, which was to be celebrated at Weymouth towards the end of August.

"But, my dear child, this is only the beginning of July," said Mrs. Delamere, when her niece spoke of journeying coastward; "you need not leave me for at least a month to come."

"You know, dear aunt, that I never quit your roof without regret; but I promised the Maynards to spend some time with them this summer, and Laura writes me word that unless I go at once, she will be so taken up with the preparations for the grand event, that she will not be able to enjoy my society. Mr. Bathurst is expected down there a week or two before the ceremony, and then, of course, I cannot claim much of my friend's attention."

"Well, dear, you are right to make the most of her; marriage oftener robs us of friends than increases their number. Does your acquaintance with the Maynard family extend beyond the daughters?"

"Oh, yes; I have been staying with them before now. The only member of the household to whom I am still a stranger is the eldest son, and I shall not long remain so to him, as Laura tells me he has come to England on purpose to be present at her nuptials."

"He was abroad then, at the time of your former visits?"

"Yes; he has been quartered for some years with his regiment in the Mediterranean, and is now home on leave."

"The bride elect, I think you told me, is about four-and-twenty?"

"About that: she is but a few months younger than myself, and I have just passed my twenty-fourth birthday."

"What a terrible disproportion between her and her intended! Why, Mr. Bathurst cannot be much under fifty, I should suppose."

"I conclude not, judging from his standing in his profession; for as far as his looks are concerned, he might pass for any age from thirty-five to sixty. Better, however, the difference of a score and a half that way than half a dozen the other."

"Oh, as to that, I don't consider the question

as one simply of figures, as many people seem to do. I quite believe, with Mr. Dickens, that ‘There is no disparity in marriage like uncongeniality of mind and purpose.’”

“Rather say, with Mr. Leycester, Aunt, for I suspect you entertain a higher respect for the commentator than for the original prophet, and it is a doctrine he loses no opportunity of inculcating upon you.”

“He quoted the passage once in my hearing,” replied Mrs. Delamere, with an emphasis intended to reprove her niece’s exaggeration; “but if I recollect rightly, it was applied to a case precisely the reverse of that which we are considering, one, namely, where the balance of age inclined very considerably upon the female side.”

“Just so,” cried Mary, “that is his mode of interpreting the text. Don’t you recollect his last illustration of it? You offered him the other day a bud off the rose trees he was admiring in the balcony: ‘No buds for me,’ he said in his peculiar manner, with a languishing voice and keen glance; ‘one never can tell how they may turn out; give me a full-blown rose,’ and he carried one away in his button hole.”

"I really cannot charge my memory with all the nonsense Mr. Leycester talks," replied Mrs. Delamere, searching diligently on the carpet for the needle that was sticking in her embroidery; "but to return to the wedding, is it settled what you are to wear?"

The diversion was a happy one; without pressing her aunt farther on what seemed delicate ground, Mary plunged into the details of the bridal paraphernalia, with as much zest as if she had not a soul immeasurably above blonde and orange blossoms; and the two ladies, superior as they both were, in many respects, to the common run of their sex, held a long and animated conversation upon the multifarious subject of modern costume, which, in deference to our male readers, we omit.

Much additional interest attached to the journey Miss Wentworth was about to undertake, from the prospect of a personal introduction to the young officer, on whose merits and charms his sisters were wont to dwell with that admiring fondness which is reserved for elder brothers. Junior relatives in that degree, usually meet with very different treatment. A man may traverse half the globe, transact the affairs of

nations, water with his blood an abundant crop of laurels, or win for himself an European reputation in the walks of art or literature; and yet, returning to the family hearth, his elder sister (by a bare twelvemonth, perhaps) shall snub him as when he wore a jacket, and stop the mouth of the fluent barrister, persuasive divine, or fiery orator with the unanswerable question, "How should *you* know?"

In the case of a firstborn son, more especially if he be also an only one, the position is entirely reversed. He is an autocrat from his birth, making more noise than fifty female babies, ruling the nursery with imperious sway, and severely trying the nerves of the governess; his father's companion, his mother's pride, the object of his sisters' strongest reverence and admiration, the miniature tyrant from whom they early learn submission to male domination and caprice.

Arthur Maynard, however, though a born despot, had been contented to use his powers like a constitutional monarch; and had taken as much pains to please, as if his position depended upon his popularity. His return, therefore, after five or six years of foreign service, was hailed

with general satisfaction. Great was the stir in the household when the hour of his arrival drew nigh; overwhelming were the embraces showered upon him as soon as he crossed the threshold, from the mother who hung in tearful rapture upon his neck, to the old housekeeper, his quondam nurse, who patiently waited her turn for a hug, before she retired to the kitchen to expatiate upon "Master Arthur's" virtues and graces. What floodgates of eloquence were opened that evening, as they sat late in the balmy twilight.

"And 'twixt them blossomed up,
From out a common vein of memory,
Sweet household talk, and phrases of the hearth,
And far allusion."

What pleasure to ramble next day over the premises, a sister on each arm, noting all the changes that had taken place in his absence; how the now disused nursery had been partitioned off into extra bedrooms, and the humble wooden gate at the bottom of the garden, had been replaced by an imposing iron one. There was the new coachhouse to inspect, the old dog's grave to be visited, and many a scene of youthful adventure to be retraced with something of the tender sentiment that clings to all relics of the past.

Next came the delight of examining the rarities imported by the traveller—the lava table-ornaments, Maltese mittens and Venetian chains for his lady relatives, together with Turkish yataghans, Albanian smoking caps, and similar nondescript articles of military vertu.

Then “The Captain” was to be exhibited to an expectant neighbourhood, which instantly became alive with dinners, soirées, balls, riding parties, and pic-nics in honor of him; and for some weeks nobody was talked about but Arthur Maynard. The rising generation copied his bow and his waistcoats; the young ladies were extremely curious to hear his opinion of the Greek women; and there is no knowing to what extent this unprecedented *furore* might have affected the position of the gentleman’s head, had not the approaching nuptials of his sister tended in some degree to divert the public attention from him.

After all this incense, it will scarcely be credited that Mr. Maynard contemplated his first introduction to Miss Wentworth with a much greater amount of nervousness than she experienced at the same prospect. Young men, as a body, certainly are more shy than their contem-

poraries of the other sex; whether this proceed from their larger share of conceit, we will not undertake to determine, merely venturing the general remark that he who thinks oftenest of himself, is the most prone to imagine others are thinking of him; few indeed are modest enough to believe themselves unobserved.

Arthur had often heard his sisters expatiate upon the abilities of their friend; and entertaining in common with most men of his age and profession, a vague dread of clever women, he took up a position on the other side of the table, covered by the urn, at the *thé dinatoire* prepared for her refreshment on the night of her arrival. Whether he expected she would address him in Latin, draw a caricature of him on the spot, or cross-examine him on his knowledge of political economy, it is impossible to say; but even when the protecting battery (*de cuisine*) was removed, he entrenched himself at a safe distance between two of his sisters, and scarcely allowed the sound of his voice to be heard until politeness obliged him to wish the enemy "good night."

The succeeding day he evaporated (to use his own term) altogether; not till near dusk did he

venture to face the foe. The sound of the piano in the drawingroom then drew him irresistibly in that direction. The girls had been turning over Mary's portfolio in search of the latest novelties, and fixing upon a particular ballad:

"Oh, do sing this!" they cried, "Arthur is always humming it."

The song in question was just one of those which depend greatly for effect upon the singer. In the hands of an ordinary performer it might have been confounded with those namby-pamby effusions which annually cumber the music-sellers' shelves; rendered with due (and not overdone) pathos and taste, it was capable of producing, and did then and there produce, a deep impression upon one at least of its hearers.

His outworks being thus taken by assault, our warrior consented to a parley; that is, he agreed to hand Miss Wentworth to table the next day, when a few guests were invited to join the family party, and however much he professed to prefer insipidity in a companion for life, he could not, after that evening's experience, deny that a certain degree of intellect was a very desirable attribute in your neighbour at a dinner party. He enjoyed his good luck at the time without

stopping to analyze it; but great was his surprise on after reflection, to discover that he had himself born the larger share in the conversation he had found so agreeable, the lady having, with the tact of genuine talent, been less intent upon displaying her own acquirements, than in drawing out his.

From this date their intimacy progressed apace. Far from giving herself out as "a strong-minded woman," or wearying her hearers by a constant straining after originality and exalted sentiment, Mary discussed common topics, and entered into ordinary pursuits with as much ease and zest as the least gifted of her neighbours; but Arthur found in her a ready and intelligent companion whenever he was disposed to stray from the beaten path, and was conscious that his own intellects were brightened, his own views enlarged, by contact with hers. In her company he could give free utterance to opinions which would have made some of his favorite polka partners stare at him as an "oddity," and raised a derisive laugh among his comrades at the mess. Arthur was not a brilliant genius nor a profound scholar, but he was both capable of appreciating Mary's mental superiority and magnani-

mous enough not to resent it. In so saying, we bear very strong testimony to the young soldier's worth; for it has been well remarked that "the man who loves [or even likes] those higher in the scale of intellect than himself, is a hero undisclosed by circumstances."

On her side, Mary had every disposition to reciprocate the partiality she inspired. The prepossession with which she encountered the brother of her friends was confirmed by all that she saw and heard of him; the preference he quickly exhibited for her society completed the favourable impression. Brought up in the dull seclusion and duller gaiety of a small country town, where a presentable young man was indeed a *rara avis*, she had enjoyed few opportunities of studying the habits and peculiarities of that interesting species of the human race: a new curate, fresh from the university, or a new assistant to the doctor, redolent of the hospitals, being the grand types of their class. Even in those visits to Mrs. Delamere, which formed the bright spots in her shady existence, matters were little mended, as the choice company frequenting the house had until quite lately consisted of persons considerably advanced in years, men who

had had time, as well as capacity, to make themselves famous. Whatever experience, therefore, she had acquired in the art of pleasing, was not calculated to take effect upon the younger portion of the lordly sex: at least, thus only can we account for the fact that, with many friends, Mary had no lovers.

She was certainly not pretty; that is to say, you would not have turned round in the street to look after her, or singled her out in a crowded ball-room; but she laboured under no positive defect in face or figure; and with youth and health, good sense and good temper, many a plainer girl has found admirers. We are convinced that practice goes a long way in securing success of this nature; just as a knowledge of his audience contributes materially to the effect produced by an orator. As the noisy demagogue is cowed by the aspect of the honorable House, and the polished debater thrown away upon an excited mob, so poor Mary, loved and caressed as a daughter or a sister, by half her female acquaintance, and accustomed to converse on equal terms with men whose notice was an honour, felt almost painfully that she did not "get on"

with those whose good opinion it was most natural she should seek.

Independently of the gratification she derived from this her first experience of male assiduities, young Maynard had many attractions. She thought him by far the best looking person she had ever encountered, not even excepting the acknowledged idol of fashion, Mr. Hyacinth Leycester. Arthur's style of beauty appeared to her more manly; his self-conceit less glaringly manifest. His black wavy hair pleased her better than Hyacinth's cinnamon tresses. Taking them altogether, there could be no doubt that Hyacinth, with his small head and finely cut features, his perfect symmetry of limb and the careless grace of his attitudes, was the more highly bred animal of the two; yet as the fleetest race horse is not the most desirable steed for ordinary purposes, so Mary fancied that a distinguished Lion might not be the most agreeable of all mortals to live with in the familiarity of domestic intercourse.

In the comparisons she often amused herself with drawing between the pair, she was disposed to assign Leycester the highest intellectual rank.

Maynard was easily impressed by external objects, but lacked the other's faculty of condensing into a few felicitous words his acute observation of them. If the dandy possessed no greater store of erudition than the soldier, he showed a more literary turn; and there were tones in his musical voice that led our fair critic to endow him with more soul, though she credited him with less heart than his rival. The latter never said anything worth repeating; though senior in years, he was much less advanced in wordly wisdom; but Mary had no hesitation in attributing to him the larger share of moral excellence.

In the more trifling matters of costume and deportment, she gave Arthur the preference. He did not wear French kid gloves of delicate hues, *fauvette* or *beurre frais*, and leave an odour of jessamine behind him, like the exquisite Hyacinth; but he displayed the amount of regard for his appearance to be expected from a member of that profession in which dress is a part of the daily duty: while with all the amusement she derived from Mr. Leycester's capricious impertinences, she was better pleased on the whole to see a gentleman assume the chivalrous position of woman's devoted slave, than the Oriental and

barbarous one of her lord and master. In brief, Arthur Maynard was a more common-place individual than Hyacinth Leycester; but he seemed also more sincere, more *genuine*, more trustworthy. Mary was content to leave the Sultan to Mrs. Delamere, and pin her faith upon the Knight.

CHAPTER V.

"A temple to friendship," cried Laura, enchanted,
We'll raise in this garden, the thought is divine."
MOORE.

THE longer Mary Wentworth pondered over Arthur Maynard's good gifts and graces, the more surprise she felt that his sister's choice should have fallen upon one who exhibited such marked deficiencies as Mr. Bathurst. Eminent in his profession she knew him to be, and a man of unblemished reputation; she had met him occasionally at her aunt's and thought his conversation sensible, his manners gentlemanlike. Had he presented himself as Mrs. Delamere's suitor, she would have had no objection to advance, though she might have secretly feared that his admission to that cheerful house would have somewhat the same effect as an east wind springing up on a sunny March afternoon. But that a grave and rather formal personage, already past the meridian of life, who could never have

been handsome in his best days, should have insinuated himself into the favour of a lively young lady, possessed of beauty enough to make her the *belle* of the neighbourhood, and sufficient fortune to absolve her from the necessity of accepting any home offered—this was a mystery beyond Miss Wentworth's comprehension.

“Do you really love this Mr. Bathurst well enough to marry him?” was a question that slipped from her lips before she had time to mitigate its bluntness.

Miss Maynard, however, did not seem offended, but proceeded to answer the inquiry in an equally straightforward manner. As to love, she said it was an exploded passion, existing only in the imagination of very romantic people; or perhaps it might be regarded as a luxury reserved for a few favoured individuals under very peculiar circumstances. She did not pretend to belong to either class. She had known Mr. Bathurst ever since she was a child, and entertained the highest respect and esteem for him, as did every one of his acquaintance, and such feelings she believed were a surer foundation for domestic happiness than the unreasoning fancies young people sometimes took to each other. He was a good deal older than

herself, certainly; but the difference between them was no greater than between mamma and papa, and mamma always said it was better to be an old man's darling than a young man's slave.

The illustration was not a happy one, as Mary had often heard Admiral Maynard address his wife, before her grown up children, in a tone of contemptuous sarcasm which accorded ill with her notions of connubial felicity. With this exception all that Laura had urged was exceedingly plausible; nay more, it was undeniably true; yet Mary was not satisfied: it seemed to her only a part of the truth. Her own heart whispered to her that *she* had more than this calm assent of the understanding to bestow upon the man who should win it; and judging of others from herself, she could scarcely understand how Laura could look forward with any satisfaction to the prospect of passing her life with a person whose presence or absence caused her no particular joy or regret; whose eye she never consulted, though she might listen to his opinion; whose hand she shook with polite indifference; a person, in short who had not the power of exciting in her any emotion whatsoever.

To have given free utterance to these impressions would have subjected the speaker to the universally-dreaded imputation of being romantic: Mary only ventured to hint that, judging from numerous little coquettices in which her friend had been engaged, she should have fancied Miss Laura Maynard not more insensible to the personal attractions of others than they were to her own charms.

"Oh! but ball-room flirtation is a very different thing from marriage," said Laura. "Of course you wish your partner in a waltz, your cavalier in a riding party, to be *comme il faut*; but what married woman ever cares about her husband's looks? one's admiration for the handsomest face in the world would wear off, after seeing it every day for a month or two."

"You can't imagine," Laura went on, "what a relief it is to be talked to rationally by such a man as Mr. Bathurst, after being pursued, as I have been, by the absurd gallantries of a tribe of empty-headed fellows. Look at my own brother, how he goes on, philandering with all the young ladies and falling over head and ears in love, as he calls it, with every pretty face he sees. I remember it used to be a favourite

notion of ours that Arthur and you were to make a match of it; but now that I understand more about such matters, I could not in conscience recommend him to any woman I cared about. I am quite sure you could not be happy with a man whom you did not respect."

"That is true," replied Miss Wentworth, with a slightly heightened colour, "but at the same time I must confess that if I felt nothing but respect for a man, I should be quite contented to have him remain my friend, without entering into closer connection with him as a husband."

Whereupon Laura bridled, with an air of alarmed modesty, and declared that she was too simple and childlike to allow her thoughts to range upon—upon such—that she knew, and wished to know, nothing more than mamma told her about a married life, and, in short, they had better not pursue the subject any further. Mary, of course, acquiesced; wondering much, however, in her own mind at the lamentable ignorance, or prudery, which cannot, or will not see, in marriage, anything more than a change of name, an accession of dignity or fortune, and an assumption of certain household responsibilities. Had Laura in reality never thought of the far

weightier considerations it involves, or was she afraid to think?

"Fortunately for me," thought Mary, rousing herself at last from a long and somewhat uneasy reverie upon the point, "I am not bound to try the experiment; but I strongly doubt whether to a young wife, a *mariage de raison* will prove more satisfactory than to an author a mere *succès d'estime*."

Whatever might be Miss Wentworth's misgivings on the subject, she confined them thenceforth to her own breast, manifesting no surprise that the bride-elect should discourse so fluently upon the accommodations and furniture of her house in town, her plans of economy and enjoyment, her intended hospitalities—and have so little to say of the individual on whose good or ill will all these schemes depended, whose temper, habits, tastes, and opinions must form the happiness or the misery of her life. It was a comfort, however, to hear the unanimous approval bestowed upon Miss Maynard's choice by those apparently most qualified to judge; and as too bright a morning often precedes a day of rain and gloom, it might, on the contrary, be hoped that the more sober expectations indulged

in on the present occasion, stood the better chance of ultimate fulfilment. There are many different ways of being happy; and if the parties chiefly concerned were contented, what could their best friends ask more?

The marriage was celebrated with all due parade and solemnity; the bridegroom looking as intensely uncomfortable as elderly gentlemen, under those circumstances, generally do; while the bride, after an unsuccessful attempt to get up a little agitation, performed her part with admirable *sang froid*, disturbed only by a slight uneasiness as to the set of her veil, which, being in point of fact, a scarf, could not be induced to drape itself gracefully.

No similar mistake was observable in the costume for which the bride, after a comfortable breakfast, exchanged her wedding paraphernalia. The excellent taste in dress, which was one of her most striking characteristics, here displayed itself to the best advantage; and Mr. Bathurst had every reason to be proud of the elegant little lady (*petite maîtresse* in both senses of the word, as the incorrigible Arthur remarked) whom (together with a basket of cake and fruit) he handed into the carriage which was to convey them the

first stage on their honeymoon, preparatory to settling down for the winter in Montagu Square.

The great event at which she came to assist being thus happily accomplished, Mary Wentworth began to talk of moving homewards. But all proposals of that nature were steadily resisted by the family. The girls protested loudly that such haste to leave them, the moment Laura was gone, showed what slight hold they possessed over her affections, compared with their more favoured elder sister. The Admiral peremptorily desired her not to leave the port without sailing orders. Mrs. Maynard seemed disposed to adopt her young guest into the place lately vacated by her daughter; while Mr. Arthur, who gave strong indications of a desire to second his mother's wishes in that respect, was ingenious in discovering reasons for delaying the period of departure, and eloquent in setting them forth. Mary experienced a singular pleasure in yielding to his solicitations; beyond the fear of overstaying her welcome, she had, indeed, no motive for hurrying on the interruption of an intimacy which had filled her with new and delightful sensations. So week after week went

by, and the day so often fixed for her journey, was still indefinitely postponed, when a letter from Mrs. Delamere, urgently pressing her niece to join her without delay at Cheltenham, brought the affair to a crisis.

"I consider I have a fair claim upon you," wrote Mrs. Delamere, "for your visit to me in London was cut cruelly short by your engagement to the Maynards. They have enjoyed a good long spell of your company; and if you do not make your appearance here within ten days from this date, I shall take it for granted that you mean to settle in Dorsetshire for life. Perhaps that charming lieutenant, of whom your letters have lately been full, has something to do with your prolonged stay! But if he wants more of your society, he really must follow you to Cheltenham; I cannot get on without you any longer. Indeed I wish he would; for I am somewhat curious to see the man whom you condescend to admire; you, who could withstand the fascinations of a Hyacinth Leycester."

"Apropos of the Leyesters, I hear that the beautiful Violet is engaged to a certain Lord Wilfred Grafton, who is reputed to be a model young nobleman, very sensible and virtuous, and

(I need scarcely add) very plain. As he is unhappily

‘the youngest of six,
And his father upon him no fortune can fix,’

it is to be inferred that the match is one of pure inclination, which is more than I expected from Miss Violet, who always gave me the impression of being a thoroughly worldly person. You will perhaps come in for the wedding, which rumour says is to take place very speedily.”

Up to this point Mary had been wondering what could have taken her aunt to Cheltenham, a place to which she had often heard her express her dislike; but in this last paragraph she fancied she could discern an explanation of the mystery.

“Can it really be,” said she to herself, as she folded up the letter, “that my aunt is so far bewitched by that fantastic young man, as to take up her abode at Cheltenham merely because the Leycesters are there?”

The prospect of satisfying her curiosity on this topic contributed more than anything else to soften Miss Wentworth’s regret at parting from her present kind entertainers. She needed some such stimulus, for Mrs. Delamere’s invitation

produced at this time none of that pleasurable excitement wherewith the young naturally contemplate an introduction to new scenes and strange persons. A spell was upon her, the blind god, had drawn his mystic bandage over her eyes, not depriving her wholly of sight, but causing her to see in all the world but one object. Yet she, with her darkened vision, wondered at the dim perceptions of her fellow victims!

On her arrival at Cheltenham, where she was most joyfully welcomed, Mary found Mr. Leycester established as *ami de la maison*, received at all hours, and tolerated in all the eccentricities that marked his capricious proceedings. Mrs. Delamere, in a rash moment, had undertaken to embroider the corner of a handkerchief for him, and it appeared to be necessary that he should look in every other day at least, to superintend the progress of the work. Mary was astounded, on entering the drawing-room one morning to find him, with his customary coolness, stretched full length upon one of the sofas, complacently surveying his boots, which, luckily for the landlady, were of the most spotless purity.

The point, in fact, in which Hyacinth distanced all meaner competitors, was his invariable

and apparently indestructible freshness. It is to be supposed that he was subject to the same influences, atmospheric, constitutional, and accidental, as other men; yet no one ever saw him look hot, or bilious; he never caught cold, or cut his fingers, or got splashed; his trousers were never wrinkled at the knees, nor his collars limp; his hair never came out of curl, and his hand always felt as if it had just been washed. Yet he did not appear to take any particular care of himself; there was nothing stiff, nothing of the "bandbox" about him. His attitude at this moment might have been expected to derange the most studied toilette; he rose from it on Mary's entrance, without the discomposure of a fold or a ringlet.

"Surely the air is strangely oppressive to-day," he said, languidly resuming his seat after saluting the new comer; "I feel quite overpowered by drowsiness; if anybody would kiss me I'd go to sleep on the instant."

"That would be setting a premium upon indolence," observed Mrs. Delamere. "Instead of courting slumber on those cushions, you had better come and hold this skein of silk."

"Hope it not, fair Omphale," cried the young

man, starting to his feet, "I always think it time to take my leave when I am invited to make myself useful. 'Never stay in a house,' said my revered father, 'after they have asked you to ring the bell, or given you hashed meat for dinner.' I shall, therefore, have the honour of wishing you a very good morning. Would you have the kindness to button my glove for me?" he added, presenting his wrist with a smile of such captivating sauciness, that had he made a much more startling request, it is doubtful if any woman could have found it in her heart to deny him.

Then radiant with his triumph, his bright eyes, as Mary fancied, beaming defiance at her, he marched off murmuring half inaudibly, the little German air:

"She is mine, she is mine."

Mrs. Delamere sat in a pleasing reverie; Miss Wentworth elevated her shoulders and eyebrows.

"It was really very amiable of you, my dear aunt," she said, after a moment's pause, "to comply with Mr. Leycester's demand, after he had refused yours."

"Did you notice, Mary," returned Mrs. Delamere, roused from her abstraction, "did you notice how his colour rose when I proposed his holding the silk? He was evidently afraid of passing for a mere squire of dames, or carpet knight."

"I am not surprised at his dreading an imputation to which his appearance renders him very liable. Conceive a gentleman walking about a town at this time of day, with a strip of pink silk round his neck by way of a cravat!"

"Why not, if it becomes him?" cried Mrs. Delamere, laughing. "It is just that species of moral courage that I admire in Mr. Leycester. I like a man bold enough to adopt the style of dress that suits his fancy or his convenience, instead of blindly following the dictates of fashion, that is, his tailor."

"Oh, of course, you take his part. Handsome does, that handsome is, must be your reading of the old proverb, my dear aunt; but I wonder what the street boys think of him," said Mary.

"And what do you suppose he cares for their opinion?" retorted Mrs. Delamere. "Ah, Mary,

the plain fact is that Arthur Maynard does not sport carnation colour ties."

"I don't see what that has to do with the question," said Mary; "but if a comparison is to be instituted, I must confess that Mr. Maynard never lounged on the sofa in my presence, nor expected me to fasten his gloves."

A few days after, the two ladies went to call upon Mrs. Leycester. The visit happened to be so timed that the luncheon bell rang before they had been many minutes in the drawing room. It was the 29th of September, and a savoury odour pervaded the house. Its mistress pressed them to stay and participate in the good cheer.

"You will think us rather *grossiers*, I am afraid," she said apologetically; "but my young people would be inconsolable without a goose at Michaelmas, so we have had it dressed for their dinner. Where is Cinthy, my dears?" added she to her elder daughters.

"In the schoolroom, I suppose, as usual," answered Violet.

We will not undertake to determine what motives led Mrs. Delamere to accept the offered hospitality; it is sufficient to state that the

dining room and the study proved to be in close contiguity. The folding doors, which alone separated them, standing half open, the back parlour presented to the party entering the front one, the following interesting tableau of "innocence surrounded by young children," as it was afterwards described by the chief actor in the scene.

Mr. Leycester, with one pretty little fair-haired girl on his knee, was engaged under her instructions in a game at cat's cradle with the other; while a blooming damsel of sixteen, just bursting into womanhood (in spite of her studiously juvenile toilette), having twined a wreath of jessamine belonging to one of her elder sisters round his temples, had just stepped in front of him to contemplate the effect, amidst a general shout of hilarity, suddenly checked by the appearance of strangers.

Not in the least disconcerted, however, was the cause of the merriment, who allowed the entangled string to be scientifically removed from his fingers, and bestowed a fraternal embrace upon the occupant of his knee, before he advanced to pay his respects to his mother's guests, forgetful or careless of the unwonted ornament of

his brow. Eglantine set up her habitual titter; he turned quietly to the looking glass, saying:

"I don't see anything so supremely ridiculous in the notion. Men used in old times, to sport chaplets of roses on festive occasions, and the effect is really not bad; I have a great mind to revive the fashion. Here, uncrown me, Veronica, and beware how you rumple my hair, as you would say yourself."

Mrs. Delamere observed admiringly the care with which the young lady reduced to their pristine order her brother's curly locks; Miss Wentworth drew down her lip at the miniature comb he produced from his pocket to assist the operation.

"Come, Cinthy, my dear," cried Mrs. Leycester, in her usual drawling voice, "the dinner will get cold while we are waiting for you to carve it."

"My dear mother, pray excuse me," replied her son, in a tone of alarm, "carving for such a party is an exertion to which I am quite unequal, it wrings one's hands so."

"Well, but who is to do it?" said Mrs. Leycester, fretfully.

"Ask Violet," returned he, "it will be good

practice for her, as she is about to begin house-keeping."

Miss Leycester's face expressed supreme contempt.

"Have the kindness to take your usual place, Miss Broadwood," she said to a "young person," who had hitherto kept in the background.

Miss Broadwood obeyed, of course, and got through the first part of her task with tolerable facility; but whether it was that the goose was tough, or that she was fluttered at the presence of visitors, when it came to dividing the bones, her skill failed her. No sooner did sundry ominous splashes betray her embarrassment, than Hyacinth, who always seemed to see without looking, advanced to the table, took the knife and fork from her hands, laid each neatly-severed limb in due order, selected a piece for his own eating, and carried it away without a word.

"Where are you going to sit, my dear boy?" enquired his mother, seeing him wander round the board, plate in hand.

"Won't you come here, sir?" said Miss Broadwood timidly, offering to resign her place.

The proposal was met by a deprecatory gesture.

"Pray take care, Hyacinth," exclaimed Violet, angrily. "You are crushing all my flounces."

"There's room here, Cinthy," suggested Veronica, from the other end of the table.

"Now, Veronica, that's a shame," cried one of the juniors opposite her; "he sat on your side yesterday."

"Don't fight, ladies, I beg," interposed Leycester, raising both his hands like Jullien when he would lay the musical storm his baton had evoked, and he wedged himself in between his two youngest sisters.

"I thought you never ate lunch," remarked Mrs. Delamere, when this important affair was settled.

"Nor do I," replied he, "except when it is put invitingly in my way. No animal in the Zoological Gardens, however well disposed and educated, can stand patiently by and see others feed. Eglantine, I'll thank you for a potatoe."

"Not that one, Eglantine," remonstrated Azalea, "it isn't half baked. Give him that nice little brown one in the corner."

The little maiden's advocacy was repaid by a smile, for which one member of the party would have been content to undertake a suit in Chan-

cery; and that is the highest species of self-devotion ever conceived since the days of Curtius. Strange that only in the Forum should such yawning gulfs be found!

"What a singular compound does that young man's character present," observed Mary to her aunt, when they had quitted the house. "Impudence and courtesy, selfishness and good nature, sense and frivolity, appear mixed up in him, in nearly equal proportions. His sterling virtues are so alloyed with conceit, his faults are gilded with such bewitching grace, that it is difficult to distinguish between the base metal and the gold."

"One point, however, is clear," responded the elder lady, "he has a heart, and as long as that organ is sound, no villain is utterly irreclaimable."

"I agree in the doctrine," said Mary; "but I am not so sure about its application in this particular case. After all, perhaps, that ready aid volunteered to the governess in distress was dictated by the desire to help himself to his own liking."

Mrs. Delamere only noticed by a look this calumnious insinuation.

"I require no other proof," she replied, "than the affection borne him by his little sisters. Neither dumb animals nor children ever attach themselves to a person devoid of feeling; their spontaneous preference is the safest test of genuine amiability."

Miss Wentworth made no answer; she was taxing her memory as to the terms upon which Arthur Maynard stood with the canine and juvenile population.

CHAPTER VI.

"She never lov'd you: only
Affected greatness got by you, not you."

CYMBELINE.

MISS VIOLET LEYCESTER's approaching marriage now became the talk of Cheltenham, and every detail connected with it was discussed with eager interest, each speaker having "the best authority" for his or her statements. Thus, while one "old friend of the family" pronounced them highly gratified at the distinguished connection they were about to form, another could state in confidence that they were greatly disappointed at the failure of their hopes in a much more elevated quarter. Whether the Duke of Broadwater had arranged the match was an open question; whether he would attend the wedding, a theme of endless debate. On one side, exaggerated reports were current as to his Grace's liberality in the way of presents; on the other rumour ran that the duke's bridal gift

consisted simply of a draft on his banker for no absolutely fabulous amount.

Perhaps, the former story being the more generally credited, people acted upon the principle that "to him that hath should more be given;" for *cadeaux* of all descriptions poured in. The delighted recipient made a private exhibition of them to half Cheltenham, gentle and simple. Hyacinth indeed suggested a charge of two-pence per head by way of rendering the visitors more select.

Mrs. Delamere and Mary met him one day in company with his sister, and a strange gentleman, whom they concluded to be the future bridegroom. There was nothing striking about the exterior of the latter; his figure was slim, without being elegant; bushy black whiskers detracted from the youthfulness of his appearance, without imparting any particular character to his face; though not below the middle height, he looked short beside his tall *fiancée*, and he had a shambling gait which contrasted ill with her stately movements. As soon as the party had passed, the niece remarked that he had the unassuming carriage of a real gentleman; the aunt observed that he made an excellent foil to Mr. Leycester.

"I suppose that was Lord Wilfred we saw with you the other day," she said at their next interview.

"My sister would say, in whose company you saw me," rejoined Hyacinth, with mock humility. "Yes, that was my noble relative that is to be. What did you think of him?"

Mary repeated her previously expressed opinion; Mrs. Delamere so far modified hers as to reply:—"His intrinsic merits are no doubt very considerable, as he does not seem to possess many external attractions."

"They ought to be," said Leycester; "he comes of a most promising stock. The father is scientific, the eldest son is philanthropic, the second (as becomes a younger son) patriotic; the mother is literary, and the daughters are devout, each after a different fashion, high, low, broad, and no church, by which last term I mean to signify a disciple in turn of every new doctrine that is broached; and Lady Sapphira Grafton has been known to pass from a dissenting chapel in Soho, through a reformed Israelite congregation at Paddington, to the shrine of St. Bennett, in Belgravia, all in the space of a twelvemonth, to say nothing of a little coquetry with the Ply-

mouth Brethren, by the way. Now my worthy brother-in-law may combine all these talents and pursuits in his single person; but, to me, I confess, he simply appears a thoroughly insignificant individual."

"What, then, do you suppose, was his recommendation to your sister's favour?"

"He is a lord," answered Hyacinth, shrugging his shoulders. "A title does sound pretty certainly. If I were called Lord Hyacinth de Lacy, I dare say I might marry any lady in the land."

Mrs. Delamere's eyes, without speaking, assented, as Mr. Leycester's, without smiling, saw.

"You are in a viciously satirical humour to-day," said Mary. "Shining qualities do not necessarily render their possessor more estimable than riches or good looks. Lord Wilfred may have none of these, and yet secure the warmest affection."

"My dear Miss Wentworth!" interrupted Hyacinth, "in another minute you will compel me to whistle, and that, my sisters assure me, is a high crime in the presence of a lady."

"Are we to understand then," resumed Mary, unable to help laughing, "that there is no love in the case?"

"Or that it is all on one side?" added Mrs. Delamere; "for Miss Leycester is certainly formed to inspire an ardent passion."

"Do you admire her so much?" asked Hyacinth carelessly.

"It is impossible to see without admiration a face and figure so entirely faultless," replied Mrs. Delamere; "though were I called upon to select a flower from 'Mrs. Leycester's bouquet,' I should fix upon Miss Veronica, whose style of beauty is more to my taste."

"Very much like me, isn't she?" said Hyacinth in his most *naïf* manner. "But to return to our subject. Somebody has laid it down that in all sentimental partnerships there is one partner who loves, and one who is loved. In this case, Lord Wilfred represents the active mood, while my sister, who likes him well enough, I dare say, graciously admits his attachment."

"Will that 'enough' satisfy Lord Wilfred?" murmured Mary, half to herself.

"It is well, at any rate, that there should be some warmth of feeling on one side," remarked Mrs. Delamere, thoughtfully; "for love, we know, has a tendency to beget love."

"So the song says," observed Leycester; and

turning round to the piano (he was seated on the music stool) he began to sing the pretty French romance:

“ Si tu savais
Comme je t'aime,
Bien sûr toi-même,
Tu m'aimerais.”

His voice was a tenor of no great power or compass, but clear and sweet, and none the less charming for a certain vibration in the sustained notes, which, though no doubt a defect in a critical point of view, imparted to the singer that interesting air of distrust in his own powers which sometimes so irresistibly bespeaks indulgence.

The marked emphasis he gave the words did not escape Miss Wentworth's attention, and served to strengthen an idea she had hitherto rejected as preposterous, that he had designs upon her aunt.

“ We were not aware, it seems, of all your accomplishments,” observed Mrs. Delamere when the song was concluded. “ What else can you do?”

“ I'll put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes’ if that will be any satisfaction to

you, fair lady," returned Hyacinth, as he quitted the instrument.

"Perhaps you can read Shakspeare, as well as quote him; and would assume for once my usual office," suggested Mary, pushing the open volume towards him. "We were perusing Twelfth Night, and had just reached the part where the duke is questioning the supposed page about his lady's years, and exclaimed, on hearing the answer:—

'Too old, by heaven; Let still the woman take
An elder than herself,'—

and so on. Ah! here is the place," added she, pointing it out with her needle.

The young man fixed his keen glance full upon her, while she read, as if to ascertain how much *malice* there was in the quotation; without betraying any consciousness of its applicability, he placidly pronounced Shakspeare out of date and "slow."

"This is more in my way," continued he taking up Tennyson's Princess, and reciting the opening lines:—

"A prince I was, blue-eyed, and fair in face,
With length of yellow ringlet, like a girl,
For on my cradle shone the Northern star."

"You are an adorer of Tennyson, no doubt," said Mrs. Delamere, smiling.

"Not entirely," replied Leycester. "His most sparkling ideas are too frequently marred by verbal affectations, as the effect of a stained-glass window is spoilt by the sight of the iron net work outside. But in his Princess, he has presented us with a work that will, I think, 'keep his memory green' for many a year to come. Indeed, I know of no light composition that can at all be compared with it."

"Except, perhaps, the Rape of the Lock," observed Mary.

"Hardly even that," rejoined Hyacinth. "In Pope's famous work, a trivial and wholly uninteresting incident is amplified into a mock-heroic poem. In the Princess we have a pretty, and even pathetic story, playfully told; it is light comedy as opposed to burlesque. The Princess is allowed to ride her hobby at a great pace, yet her enthusiasm is never made ridiculous; we sympathise even while we disagree. As to the dénouement, I consider the gradual development of the intellectual Ida's womanly feelings, on witnessing the helplessness and sufferings of the man she had looked on so coldly, when he wooed

her in the pride of youth and health, is the conception of a true poet, and as admirably expressed as anything in the language."

By way of illustrating his criticism, Hyacinth turned over the leaves, selecting a passage here and there, till reaching the concluding portion, he read it entire, infusing such seductive tenderness into the speeches of the invalid Prince, and giving such effect to the awakening sentiments of the heroine, that both his hearers sat fascinated by the magic of his voice.

When it ceased, they were quite unable to resume the ordinary tone of conversation; even after the charmer had taken his leave, the silence remained some time unbroken, each pursuing what turned out to be a nearly similar train of thought; for when Mrs. Delamere, putting up her embroidery, said at last: "Well, Mary, do you suppose Arthur Maynard can read poetry as well as that?" Miss Wentworth started at the coincidence of the question with her private meditations.

Before she had time to reply, the butler threw open the door, and announced Captain Maynard. Mary, with colour heightened, partly by pleasure, partly by a meaning glance from her aunt,

advanced to receive and introduce the newcomer, who, happily unconscious of the comparisons instituted between him and his predecessor, exerted himself to the utmost to be agreeable. Mrs. Delamere's pre-disposition in his favour, as the object of her niece's manifest partiality, was confirmed by his appearance and manners, and he left with every encouragement to repeat his visit.

"Well, aunt?" was Mary's eager exclamation as soon as he was out of hearing.

"Well, my dear, your friend is really not amiss, though he wants the style of Mr. Leycester; and I like him, because he has the good taste to admire you. It is quite evident that you are his attraction, for he gave but a lame account of his motive for coming hither. We will invite him to dinner, and ask the Leyesters to meet him. I should like to see the two together; and if Miss Violet could be induced to bring her fiancé, we might also satisfy our curiosity as to the terms upon which they stand with one another."

It may gratify the reader to be conducted by the direct path to a point which Mrs. Delamere was compelled to adopt a circuitous route to

attain. We will therefore state at once that Lord Wilfred Grafton, being on a visit to his aunt, Lady Maria Thackray (whom we have already mentioned as a relative of the Duke of Broadwater), at her villa in the neighbourhood of London, met there the beautiful Miss Leycester, who was also staying in the house, fell desperately in love with her, and proposed to her before the party separated. The damsel, as in duty bound, referred him to her mother, who would have closed at once with the offer, but was persuaded by Violet to delay her consent until she had consulted the Duke upon the subject, and thus given him the opportunity of preferring his own suit, if he had, as she secretly hoped, any intention of so doing.

Great was the fair schemer's disappointment at finding in the Duke a warm advocate of his young kinsman's claims. He extolled his good qualities, alluded blandly to the pleasure it would give himself to reckon the lovely Violet among his family connections, and hinted at the influence he could exercise in promoting the pecuniary interests of his charming protégée and the husband of her choice. The impassive Violet actually put herself into a passion at the down-

fall of her ambition; but Mrs. Leycester, with her wonted philosophy, quickly acquiesced in the existing state of affairs. Not being endowed with literary tastes, it is probable that she had never read La Fontaine's fable of the Heron; but she was thoroughly convinced of the doctrine inculcated therein, never to trifle with opportunities.

"Don't let go the bird in your hand, Letta," said she to her daughter: "those in the bush may not be so easily caught. Here is a match that most girls would snap at; if not a peeress, you will be 'my lady,' and secure a permanent footing among that class to which you are now admitted by favour. Who can tell how long the Duke's fancy may last? As it is, you see you miscalculated the nature of his attachment; indeed, I always thought, though it did not become me to say so, that there might be other reasons than his admiration for you, my dear child, for his long and frequent visits to the house."

The young beauty of twenty-one smiled in silent disdain at the matured vanity of five-and-forty; but she acted upon her mother's advice, and intimated to the expectant Lord Wilfred,

with befitting affability, her gracious acceptance of his proposals. His excessive delight almost touched her cold heart; and the flattering attentions paid her by his numerous high-born relatives quickly reconciled her to her lot.

The young lady herself, whose mind was not as lofty as her pretensions, might have had no objection to exhibit her titled admirer to an envying circle, as she had already displayed her *trousseau* to all comers. Lord Wilfred, however, had the good taste to eschew publicity as much as possible, and showed himself but once in company with his betrothed until the period appointed for their nuptials, which were celebrated with great pomp and parade, a bishop officiating, assisted (according to the new fashion) by as many clergymen as there were bridesmaids. A long and minute account of the ceremony appeared the next day in a special supplement of the local paper, stating at what hour the sun rose on the eventful morning, the pedigree of the horses which drew the bridegroom's chariot, on which side he parted his hair, the number of flounces worn by the fair assistants, with the name of the florist who supplied their bouquets, the exact pattern of the bride's veil, together

with a fancy sketch of her history and endowments, and the colour of her brother's tie.

That the last point should have attracted the reporter's notice was the less remarkable, as we have seen that Mr. Leycester was addicted to certain singularities in that respect, which it required his happy audacity to carry off. Disdaining in other details of costume the vulgar ambition of leading the mode, he adopted in this a style of his own; his simple *nœud* of bronze or carnation silk *faisait le desespoir* of his rivals at the Coventry. The particular shade he affected of the latter hue was frequently sported by his lady admirers under the title of "Hyacinth colour." On the present occasion, however, he wore (we quote from the "Cheltenham Jenkins") "a shirt edged with a delicate tracery of blue, turquoise studs, and a muslin cravat to match." Some one asked him at the breakfast if his adornments were assumed in compliment to "Lady Wilfred Grafton?"—poetic licence having settled that the violet is blue, rather than purple.

"No," answered he; "I wear blue, because it is the emblem of hope; and I am determined

not to let another sister precede me to the hymeneal altar."

"Ah, Mrs. Delamere," thought Mary Wentworth, "what is typified by that rosy flush on your cheek? Can you for an instant dream of marriage with that full-grown Cupid, as Arthur Maynard calls him."

At that moment, Eglantine turned to her with the remark :

"What a nice young man that was we met at your house the other evening. My brother was quite jealous of him. Cinthy," cried she across the table, "didn't you think Captain Maynard very handsome?"

"He was very well—for an officer," replied the oracle thus invoked; "but those fellows always have a stiff look about them, and are as like one another as if they were all cut out of the same piece. The infantry strut, the cavalry swagger, and all talk slang and smell of cigars. I hope you do not worship at the Horse Guards, Mrs. Delamere."

"I don't carry my partiality to that extent," she replied smiling, "though I am a little inclined to be of my niece's opinion that a military

gentleman—when he is one—surpasses every other. I dare say she is fully prepared to rebut your foul calumnies against the army in general."

"They do not stand in need of defence," observed Mary with some warmth. "The envy with which civilians invariably regard them is the shade produced by the light of their popularity."

Hyacinth, nettled at the supposition that jealousy—which is a tacit admission of inferiority—had dictated his remarks, was about to reply, but a noble guest at the head of the table rising just then to propose the health of the newly-married pair, a stop was put to the wordy war.

Mrs. Delamere was secretly amused at the discussion, for though she had paid great attention to Mr. Maynard for Mary's sake, and thought him, as Eglantine expressed it, "a very nice young man," she could not support with patience any comparison between him and her brilliant favourite. Mary herself was perhaps conscious that the contrast was rather disadvantageous to her champion; "but granting," thought she, "that he does not possess all the elegance,

the polish of the town-bred Hyacinth, yet a man's morals are surely of more importance than his manners; if that excessive refinement is only to be acquired by the sacrifice of everything like sound principle and honest feeling, he is better to my taste without it."

Heaven help sensible people, when they do fall in love! It never occurred to this worthy young lady that her penetration might be as much at fault as her aunt's; and that, for aught she could tell on so short an acquaintance, the idol she had set up, though with a different class of defects, might fall as far short of perfection as Mrs. Delamere's.

Miss Wentworth, however, could scarcely be expected to criticise very rigidly the shortcomings of a gentleman who had travelled a hundred and fifty miles for the pleasure of seeing her. She left Cheltenham, if not actually engaged, at least under the pleasing conviction that she had inspired the same interest she experienced, and with very fair grounds for her belief.

The retirement to which she returned was well calculated to nurture her passion: her present life presented no fresh incidents to efface

the recollections of the past. Among London men of high fashion, the lieutenant appeared somewhat at a disadvantage; compared with the rural gentry around her, he rose immeasurably in her esteem. He did not sing little French songs, nor sit a horse with the surpassing grace of Hyacinth Leycester; but he did not walk with his feet turned in, like the young squire of Barton, nor talk through his nose, like the curate of the same. If his nails were not the precise shape of a filbert, and the colour of a rose, they were at least scrupulously clean, which is more than could be affirmed of the local rising generation; while a pair of thread gloves, which had once cost her a pang, because worn in Hyacinth's presence, appeared infinitely preferable to none at all.

In short, if Arthur, present in the body, was a hero to be admired and venerated; Arthur, absent and invisible, straightway became a demigod, and had divine honours paid him. The greatest enjoyment she had, consisted in receiving letters from his sisters, who were sure to allude to his proceedings, and in writing to her aunt, in correspondence with whom alone she could permit herself the luxury of dilating upon

the topic which almost exclusively absorbed her attention.

Mrs. Delamere's epistles were nearly as much confined to one subject as her own. If the niece's visions all pointed to the garrison at Malta, it was plain that the aunt's castles were all built in Leicestershire, to borrow a vile pun of Mr. Maynard's. At present, however, her communications also consisted chiefly of reminiscences, for the seductive Hyacinth had quitted Cheltenham, on a visit to his eldest sister, Mrs. Sidney Aguilar.

CHAPTER VII.

Once on a time, so runs the fable,
A country mouse, quite hospitable,
Received a town mouse at his board,
Just as a farmer might a lord.

POPE.

THE scene changes to a bed-room in Sandbourne Parsonage; we had almost said a bed, for that article of furniture was so spacious as to occupy nearly the whole of the apartment devoted to its reception. Those charged with the arrangement of the chamber had evidently considered that to sleep would be the grand object of its occupant, for very little provision had been made for the due fulfilment of other functions. A very small table, screwed into a corner, sustained a looking-glass about as large as the one preserved at Fontainebleau, in which Henri IV. was proud to view his royal physiognomy. The washing apparatus, modestly confined to another corner, was also *à la Française*, that is to say, on the most diminutive scale; though the

fire which sparkled in the grate was as thoroughly English as the climate which rendered it agreeable, while roses were still in bloom.

Enter Hyacinth, in great tribulation at the absence of his dressing case, &c., his luggage having been left at the station, a dozen miles off, to come on by the omnibus, which omnibus did not reach Sandbourne till the next morning. Unwarned of this fact, the unhappy gentleman had abstained from cumbering his brother-in-law's pony chaise with anything heavier than a hat-box. The statue of Hector, "clothed in a helmet," does not present such an image of destitution; nor did Niobe, weeping over her children, offer a more touching spectacle, than our bereaved exquisite mourning for his carpet bag. Offers of temporary assistance from his host, soothed him but little; for invested with a shirt of the tall, broad-shouldered Aguilar, he would feel like an infant in long clothes; and a dressing gown being a luxury beyond the simple curate, he was obliged to borrow one of his sister's, which produced upon him the effect of the Highland—or, as we are in a classical humour, let us say, the Roman garb. A comb, we have seen, he always carried in his pocket; razors, of one

sort or another, were easily procured; but how could he hope to find, on the Reverend Sidney's dressing table, the pomades and essences in which he delighted? And where, alas! was the ravishing nautical costume which, in accordance with established custom, he had prepared for his sojourn among woods and fields? In case of his wardrobe not arriving in time for his morning toilet, he made up his mind to remain in bed, like Robert of Normandy under similar difficulties; and somewhat calmed by this determination—for is not history described as philosophy teaching by example?—he descended to partake of refreshment in the shape of what ladies call a meat tea.

The drawing-room, if small, was prettily furnished, and did credit to the taste of its proprietress, who, a strange compound of the *élégante* and the slattern, lay slipshod and dishevelled on the sofa, leaving her doting husband to superintend the preparations for their repast. Now the making of tea is a process rarely attended with success in any but female hands, and Mr. Aguilar's decoction was no exception to the general rule. Nor were large, fat, mutton chops, cut by a country butcher, and

dressed by a "plain cook," more grateful to a club-man's palate, than the weak brown fluid the less fastidious curate first dispensed, and then imbibed with relish in vast quantities.

Scarcely was the meal concluded, than he withdrew to ascertain what arrears of business had accumulated in his absence, while Rose opened a piano, much in want of the tuner, and began to play "Home, sweet home," inviting her brother to join her. To ask a man to sing when he is cross and hungry, is to try his self-command to a very dangerous extent, tempting him to the use of sundry unauthorised parts of speech. Hyacinth felt that his fortitude was nearly at an end; if a cigar had been obtainable, he would have gone and smoked it in the garden, but as it was not, he had no resource but to go to bed.

A final trial awaited him: in answer to his request for hot water, the flustered housemaid brought him about a tumbler-full, all she had, with a promise of as much as he liked the next morning. Smothering a groan, the rueful traveller closed his door upon the world, dusted himself as well as he could, and buried his sorrows in the snowy pillows. Sleep on, Sybarite!

it is only a rose leaf or two that is doubled under you now.

On his enquiring the breakfast hour before retiring for the night, a very early one had been named; it cost him some exertion to make his appearance a good half-hour after the period so mentioned, when no signs were visible of the morning meal. Mr. Aguilar, evidently unshaved, hurried down on hearing him descend the stairs, with the key of the tea-caddy, and the pleasing intimation that Rosy was only just up, but begged they would proceed to business without waiting for her. Sydney was preparing again to act as her substitute, when he was summoned to speak to one of his parishioners.

"Just wet the tea for me, Cinthy, there's a good fellow," was his parting request.

Hyacinth's face would have been a study for Mr. John Leech. His maiden essay, however, turned out so much more successful than his brother-in-law's of the evening before, that he had some notion of continuing himself in the office during his stay, an arrangement in which Mrs. Aguilar felt little disposed to acquiesce, when she inspected her tea chest. As soon as breakfast was over, she volunteered to conduct

her brother over the premises, and shew him something of the neighbourhood. Three quarters of an hour having been devoted to putting on her bonnet, they were about to start, when the cook ran after them in great agitation, to remind her mistress that she had not ordered dinner. A fresh delay of some duration ensued, for Rose was one of those women who never can come to a prompt decision, and would balance for an hour between a fillet or a sirloin of beef. Hyacinth never allowed himself to be seduced into a shop with her, as once there, he knew that the whole morning or afternoon would slip away, while she was hesitating between two shades of the same colour, or weighing the comparative merits of stripes and spots. To beguile his present enforced attendance upon her leisure, he strummed a little upon the piano, arranged his curls before the glass, looked over the music, among which was nothing more modern than "Trab, trab," and the books, including the *Diary of a Physician*, Sir Charles Grandison, Junius' Letters, Harry Lorrequer, a collection of High Church poetry, which he had not depth of mind enough to fathom, and an imposing row of heavy quartos, which he did

not venture to disturb; the dust upon them showing that similar forbearance had long been exercised towards them. By the time he had completed these researches, examined all the knick-knacks, and discovered an embroidered handkerchief, "*qui olim albus erat,*" tucked under a sofa cushion, his sister joined him and professed herself ready to start.

The walk, after all, was not a very lively one. The cottages were too few and too scattered to form a regular village, while the church, large and handsome, but in bad repair and sadly disfigured with whitewash and wooden galleries, seemed out of all proportion to the wants of the population. The roads were hard and dusty, and Rose objected to the field paths, for fear of the cattle. There were no signs of any resident gentry, and the prospect altogether appeared so dispiriting, that Leycester returned, with less animation than when they set out, to more "plain cooking" at three, the very worst hour for dinner in the whole twenty-four, *selon lui*, as it cuts the day right in the middle, and spoils both halves. In compliance with his recommendations, it was agreed to postpone it next day to five, a concession for which he was very grateful,

until he perceived that it had cost his entertainers very little, their repasts being served at a different time every day of his sojourn.

Obstacles of all kinds continued to present themselves whenever they attempted to stir abroad. A country clergyman, especially if he be popular, is subject to constant inroads upon his leisure; Mr. Aguilar was often summoned to attend a sick bed, or transact parochial business, at the moment he was preparing for a drive. If no such *contretemps* occurred, the next difficulty was to get the party comfortably settled in the pony chaise. Hyacinth had no objection to occupy the back-seat; but he did most determinedly resist jumping out to put on or take off the drag, a duty of frequent recurrence in that hilly country. His brother-in-law would not have hesitated an instant to resign the reins, had not the length of his legs rendered it an utter impossibility for him to cramp himself into so limited a space. Neither gentleman, of course, could propose to remove a lady from the place of honour, and the lady concerned loved her ease too well to volunteer the sacrifice.

If they walked, fresh troubles arose. Hya-

cinth, though extremely fond of flowers, was no botanist; he liked them grown in a hot-house, and cut ready for his button hole, but was impatient of a stoppage every three minutes to pick up specimens in a hedge. He had a horror of old women and close rooms; took no interest in Widow Sawdey's rheumatism; and when the curate dived into a hovel where he could not stand upright, persisted in waiting for him outside. Once he submitted to be shown over the charity school, when Mr. Aguilar, observing his languid countenance, hastily concluded the display of copy books, &c., and apologised for wearying him with such dull details.

"Don't mention it, pray," said Hyacinth faintly; "I'm charmed with the sight; but you should have warned me to bring some eau de Cologne."

But if the mornings were wearisome, the evenings were worse. The brothers-in-law had scarcely an idea in common, so conversation hung fire. The books within reach were not to Leycester's mind. Rose had promised him singing lessons, but always found some reason for postponing the task; she was tired, or she was hoarse, or "dear Sidney" wanted to prepare his

sermon, and must not be disturbed. Moreover, Hyacinth, whose taste, like that of many other men of the world, was as refined as his principles were lax, was not at all amused at the proofs of fondness the attached couple permitted themselves in his presence. Even before a member of her own family, he thought Rose might have abstained from seating herself upon her husband's knee, looking into his eyes, pinching, hugging, and otherwise playfully assaulting him. "Dear Sidney," to do him justice, appeared a little ashamed of these proceedings, which, however, he made no attempt to check.

"This sort of Adam-and-Eve business was very appropriate to Paradise, no doubt," wrote Leycester to Mr. Dacre one evening, when he had retired in disgust from the drawing-room; "but then our first parents had the place to themselves. Satan would have had some right to feel annoyed if he had been compelled to witness every day the scene that so disturbed his serenity, as I confess it disturbs mine. In fact, my dear fellow, I feel myself quite out of my element here. There is plenty of partridge shooting to be had, but you know I am no sportsman; the hunting season has not begun, and if

it had, there is not a stable for miles round whence one could borrow a respectable hunter. Unless you like to send me down Roderick, who would be all the better for a little practice across country, I shall cut next week. Ever yours, old boy,

“H. LEYCESTER.

“P.S. There actually is not a single woman in this infernal place.”

Though the above statement was not literally true in a statistical sense, Sandbourne really was destitute of the class of women on whom Mr. Hyacinth was wont to exercise his powers of fascination. The Hall, which almost every village boasts, was shut up, the owners being abroad. The rectory, a red-brick edifice upon the approved tea-caddy model, was in an adjacent hamlet. The population of Sandbourne proper, comprised a doctor, with a trim little wife, whose youthful figure induced Hyacinth once to follow her through half a dozen fields, he taking her for a girl of eighteen; and a house and estate agent, who, on the strength of owning a few acres of ground, assumed the style of a landed proprietor, said *we* when declaiming at provincial meetings upon

agricultural grievances, and rode from the nearest town after office hours upon a lean animal, which he was pleased to say "showed blood," but which most people thought to show bones far more conspicuously. His partner did her best to play the part of a county lady, affecting a great taste for rural pursuits, and manifesting that nervous solicitude to be genteel, which is declared by De Custine to be the surest sign of innate vulgarity.

"Do you not delight in this sweet country?" said she to Hyacinth on introduction.

"I should like it much better if it were paved," replied the exquisite, whose neat *chausseur* was certainly not adapted for stony roads or wet grass.

The list of possible victims scarcely extended beyond these. Of what earthly use was it to inspire with tender sentiments the breasts of the five Misses Benson, even though one was a poetess (after the manner of Wordsworth), and wore her hair in a fanciful modification of the antique fashion. There certainly was a Maid of the Mill, but she did not realize the heroine of Cinthy's favourite song, standing five feet seven in her (prunella) shoes, and coming out very

strong on Sunday in a yellow gown and a bonnet with feathers. Farmer Paul had a pretty daughter, who wore flounces instead of pattens, and rode on horseback; but her attractions were nullified by a forward brother, who frightened Hyacinth by shaking hands with him, and horrified him by copying his cravat.

Remained the rector's daughter, Miss Robertson, who was reputed an heiress, and on whom Mrs. Aguilar accordingly nourished designs on her brother's behalf. She was quite excited on receiving an invitation to dine at the rectory.

"Here's a chance for you, Cinthy," she cried, holding up the note in triumph. "You can surely cut out that Mr. Dutton, who is always hanging about the house."

Mr. Dutton was the other curate.

"You flatter me," answered Leycester, yawning, "I am not ambitious enough to attempt such an achievement."

"Nonsense, Cinthy, have you been introduced yet?"

"I have been spared that hitherto."

No representations could rouse Hyacinth to a becoming amount of interest in the coming festivity, from which his host and hostess promised

themselves and him so much enjoyment. At first he declined going altogether, but was persuaded to consent; and derived a faint sense of refreshment from the performance of a regular toilette on the occasion. Rose had arranged and rearranged hers at least twenty times before the eventful day arrived, ending in an evidently impromptu selection from her stock of ribbons, flowers, and ornaments. Moreover, she did not commence operations till she heard the chaise coming up to the door; and the "five minutes" she promised to consume expanded into an hour, every article having to be hunted up separately from drawers where slippers and handkerchiefs, gloves new and old, collars clean and soiled, rings, half-pence, and artificial flowers, were jumbled together.

Hyacinth was vexed, fearing the delay might be attributed to him, and holding in special contempt the snobbishness of seeking to gain importance by keeping a whole party waiting for you. The Aguilars, however, took the matter very coolly, and he was fain to do the same.

Dinner was announced immediately after their entrance; the Rev. James Dutton being the only other guest. The rector gave his arm to Mrs.

Aguilar; Sidney escorted Miss Robertson, a bouncing young woman, dark-browed, smartly dressed, and passably lively, though there was a certain stiffness in her smile, and constraint in her voice, which showed that amiability was not their habitual expression. Behind came the two bachelors, eyeing one another with such feelings as a dainty-limbed thorough-bred, and a good sound cob, might be supposed mutually to entertain. To the Reverend James, with the bloom of "orders" fresh upon him, Hyacinth appeared "an awful swell;" while the latter, finding his companion had but two ideas—Rugby and foot-ball—set him down at once as "a muff."

A short stoppage occurred on the march, Mrs. Aquilar having forgotten to divest herself of the woollen socks which had kept her feet warm during the drive in an open chaise; but the scene of action was reached at last, and the attack began upon some excellent soup. This advanced guard being disposed of, a considerable pause ensued; fish was not to be had (on slight occasions) so far inland, and Leycester was fain to adventure his brilliant teeth upon bread a week old, until the main body of the repast was brought up, consisting of a boiled leg of mutton

which (favouring our martial simile) was of a most sanguinary hue; a pair of "barn-door fowls," no fatter than other animals compelled to pick up a living as best they can, peas (also *à la militaire*, for they might have served as rifle bullets), carrots, turnips, and potatoes, all in one dish.

" You see we make no stranger of you, Mr. Leycester," observed the rector, pronouncing the conventional formula.

" So I perceive," began Hyacinth, absently, but fortunately recovering himself in time, he added, with scarcely a perceptible pause, " much to my satisfaction ; I abhor ceremony."

And to atone for the breach of courtesy he had so nearly committed, the really good-natured exquisite strove to shake off his despondency, and contribute to the general entertainment. He had even forced such a smile as a martyr might give, at some jocular essay of his host's on the subject of a merry-thought, when the servant presenting him pepper in an open tea-cup, caused him to sneeze violently and repeatedly. Now there was nothing that annoyed Hyacinth more than a sneezing fit; the ridiculous explosion it created, the suffusion of the

countenance it entailed. "Gone was his calmness" from that moment; and he mentally resolved to quit, as soon as possible, the scene of his trials.

Did we not fear to produce upon the reader the same effect as the rector's wit produced upon his guest, what an eloquent paragraph might we here indite upon the great results which have often followed trivial causes. Mrs. Masham's glass of water, and a hundred other examples, recur to memory at once. Yet this one single instance shall suffice. But for that inopportune convolution of the olfactory nerves, the handsome trifler weaned from his artificial tastes, might have wooed and won the swarthy heiress, and subsided into a respectable country gentleman, learned in short-horns, and the price of oats; as it was, he bestowed an inward malediction upon rural simplicity, turned his back upon the (supposed) seat of all the virtues, and wrote by the next post to announce to his mother his immediate departure from that *Sandbourne* to which, said he, "no traveller returns."

On his way home from the station at Cheltenham, he passed the house still occupied by Mrs. Delamere. It was seven o'clock, a carriage was

setting down dinner company; lights gleamed cheerfully through the drawing room blinds, and the red curtains below; the open door displayed the flower-decked hall, with its band of active attendants. The traveller could almost hear the rustle of silks on the stair. Leaning forward in the vehicle, he inhaled, as it were, the odour of luxury so grateful to his nostrils; fancy pictured to him in vivid colours the warmth and radiance within that well-appointed abode, the glitter of plate, the ringing of glass, the delicate incentives to appetite, the subdued hum of conversation, the highly-bred guests, the still fair and winning hostess.

“ Away with a modest competence and a provincial heiress, who would bring me seven hundred a year and a large family!” was Hyacinth’s mental exclamation; “the widow’s establishment is the thing for me. I’ll pocket the difference of years, and propose to her to-morrow.”

CHAPTER VIII.

“Veux-tu mes biens ? ils sont à toi !
Avec bonheur je te les donne,
Si ton regard brille et rayonne,
Et se repose un peu sur moi!
Oh ! prends mes biens ! ils sont à toi !”

MANY a seed, wafted hither and thither by the wind, takes root where it accidentally falls ; many an idea, casually struck out in the course of conversation, becomes the groundwork of a settled plan. The matrimonial scheme lightly sketched by Hyacinth Leycester during his homeward drive, presented itself again to his imagination at a more leisure moment, and gave him matter for reflection, as serious as he ever bestowed on anything.

The siege he had begun to lay to the widow's heart was undertaken in pure wantonness ; it tickled his fancy to carry his victorious arms into untrodden quarters, and set the gossip-mongers on a false scent. Many an unpretending damsel had he raised to notice by his apparent

pursuit; those who saw far into millstones never imagining that a penniless youngster would waste his labour upon a barren soil. Yet while dexterously avoiding the reputation of a fortune-hunter, he was none the less steadily bent upon contracting an advantageous alliance. Brought up with expensive tastes and furnished with no legitimate means of gratifying them, marriage was in fact the only method left him of acquiring wealth.

Like the renowned Cecil, he had been a coxcomb from his very cradle; wore his rich fancy costumes with infinite grace, and returned the caresses lavished on him with an air of premature enjoyment most entertaining to behold. His childish beauty caused him to be selected as one of the pages at a royal coronation, from which event might be dated his introduction into public life. He stepped at once from boyhood to manly dignity; for after wearing petticoats much beyond the period when the distinctive symbol of virility is usually assumed, he rode a blood horse in Rotten Row, while most lads of his age were still unweaned from leap frog; and was a favourite guest in fashionable boudoirs, while his compeers were studying slang under the

bargemen of Oxford. Great ladies extolled the humid brightness of his eyes, the peach-like bloom upon his cheek; and disputed the pretty plaything as Oberon and Titania disputed the changeling page.

Thus, enervated and refined by female associates, the spoilt child of society lacked the energy and perseverance which enable a man to work his way to opulence. His father died before Hyacinth was of an age to adopt a profession; and his mother, with blind partiality for an only son, did not press him to a decision; nay, encouraged him in idle objections. Medicine was not stylish enough; law involved too much hard study; he was thought too handsome, or too giddy for the church; neither army nor navy suited his views, for he hated salt-water, scorned the riotous joys of a mess, and shuddered at the idea of Ireland or the Bight of Benin. He would not have disliked a troop in the Life Guards, even at the risk of a headache every time he wore his gorgeous helmet; but all the money he could ever hope to possess would hardly purchase him admission into that aristocratic corps.

Nothing then remained but the civil service

of his country; and gladly would he have filled some snug little post in the Circumlocution Office at home, or polished his pronunciation at a foreign Court. His father's chief connections, however, lay among the party not then in power, and till their return to Downing Street, the son's golden visions of an attachéship at Paris or Naples, stood no chance of being realized.

But though habituated to look upon marriage simply as a means of advancing himself in the world, and having, it may be, "*le cœur sec et aride, comme tous ceux qui ont beaucoup aimé les femmes, ou plutôt qui en ont été beaucoup aimés*," it was not without some sort of repugnance that a young man of twenty-three contemplated a union with a woman more than ten years his senior. Indifferent, like most handsome people, to beauty in others, and little addicted to dancing, he had never joined the throng which besets each pretty débutante in the ball room, nor attached himself to the car of any reigning belle. Not that Mrs. Delamere was wanting in a certain mature comeliness, her physique being such as rather gains than loses by ripening; still it was mature, and the half-stifled promptings of nature combined with a

wholesome dread of ridicule, in deterring him from so unequal an alliance. He was neither old, nor dull, nor vicious enough to have lost all susceptibility to the strongest, and sweetest, and purest of human emotions; and there were seasons when the man awoke within him, and silenced all the sophistries of worldly wisdom; but the latter soon resumed its sway. If at any time he felt the irresistible attraction of youth and loveliness, he avoided the dangerous neighbourhood, and sternly suppressed the weakness which he told himself he could not afford to indulge.

A hundred trifling wants daily presented themselves which it was beyond his means to satisfy honestly, while his gentlemanly instincts, to attribute no higher motive—forbad the adoption of those questionable expedients so often employed by less rational or less scrupulous spendthrifts. A well endowed wife was his only resource against two alternatives, equally distressing to contemplate. Either he must run in debt, subject himself to the degradation of duns, and mix up his honorable name with dirty bill transactions; or he must renounce the coveted elegances, and plod laboriously during the bril-

liant summer of his years to secure a maintenance for the winter of life. As well ask the butterfly to emulate the steady industry of the bee! So he restrained his heart from all generous impulses, and sought only, like some doughty warrior, overmastered by numbers, to sell himself as dearly as possible.

Considerable variety of opinion prevailed in his family when he first hinted at matrimonial intentions with regard to Mrs. Delamere. Rose disapproved of the sacrifice, and carried him off into the country in the hope of elevating and purifying his ideas; we have seen with what result. Violet, in all the newly-blown pride of rank, argued that status was of far more importance than wealth; and had views of her own for him, upon a certain Lady Frances, who was connected with half the nobility and two thirds of the Cabinet. Mrs. Leycester, who thought no match was good enough for her son, though none was to be despised for her girls, rather held with Lady Wilfred; besides exhibiting some dread of a daughter-in-law not much younger than herself. Eglantine promised to like any sister who would give nice parties; while Veronica threatened to hate every claimant on her brother's affection,

and Miss Broadwood (the governess) thought with envy and awe of the woman who should be privileged to behold him so near.

Hyacinth agreed to suspend operations until he had seen the Lady Frances in question.

"But I don't expect she'll suit," added he; "a title is all very well in its way, and I should have no objection to appear occasionally among the distinguished guests at this Park, and that Castle, belonging to one or other of my illustrious relatives; but give me a comfortable home of my own to fall back upon; I could not endure to go through life as a hanger-on at the skirts of nobility."

"Lady Frances has at least the advantage of not being a widow," said Violet rather sharply; fancying she detected in the above remark a reference to her own position.

"I am not so sure that is an advantage," returned Hyacinth; "your spinsters are always encumbered with fathers, uncles, or guardians of some kind, who ask impertinent questions about your property, &c., before they consent to the engagement, and look devilish sharp after the settlements. Now a dowager has no one to consult but herself; unless, indeed, she happens

to be the relict of a man who preserves by his will the power of domineering over her even from his grave. I had better make some enquiries, by the bye, touching the late Mr. Delamere's testamentary dispositions, before I commit myself beyond redemption."

Until the records of Doctors' Commons could be duly searched, the anxious lover betook himself to the neighbourhood of the Graftons, in order, as he said, "to give Lady Frances a chance of securing the best prize going in the matrimonial market."

Violet could not receive him under her own roof as Rose had done. Her husband deriving his chief means of support from some minor office he held at Court, was obliged to follow its movements; the intervals of his attendance upon royalty were passed at some one of the lordly mansions to which he could claim a kinsman's right of access. He, therefore, maintained no permanent residence wherein to harbour a guest; but Hyacinth was made free of his apartments in the day-time, and enjoyed there an opportunity of canning Lord Wilfred's domestic arrangements, and considering how far a similar position would be agreeable to himself.

No complaint could be made of a want of neatness and precision in the sphere over which Violet presided; everything was as regular—not to say as monotonous—as clockwork. Not a chair nor a book ever strayed from its appointed place; not a minute's law was allowed for dinner, or even lunch, and these repasts were served with a degree of stately formality that well nigh took away Hyacinth's appetite—which was fortunate, as his sister deemed it vulgar to eat much. Her servants looked so imperturbably solemn and stiff, that they might have been mistaken for clever automata, had she not testified her belief in their human attributes by speaking French in their presence—thereby leading them to suppose that she was talking scandal, when she was merely asking for the salt.

Lord Wilfred, who was not a first-rate linguist, protested in vain against the affectation; Hyacinth, who was, resented it by simulating ignorance of her meaning, and mistranslating her words in the most absurd way. The master (by courtesy) of the house, was alternately amused and terrified at the happy audacity of his guest; he himself standing in such awe of his queenly consort, that he dared not kiss her

(by Hyacinth's account) without a written permission.

Never, truly, was that unmanageable animal, a husband, kept under better control. His days were consecrated to her service; his journeys, visits, pleasures, expenses, were regulated by her sole will. At once cold and exacting, she now repelled his proffered caresses, then reproached him with indifference; and, conscious, perhaps, of her own want of feeling, was perpetually looking out for symptoms of declining attachment in him.

Altogether, Hyacinth augured little from a wife selected by her; nor did a personal acquaintance with the bride of her choice tend much to obviate his prejudices. Lady Frances was tall, bony, and frigid, with (as he complained) not a soft place about her, mentally or physically. The condescension of her manner to him, rather hurt than flattered the pride of our Antinous, who, moreover, failed to detect in her any indications of an incipient passion; and he had some experience in such matters. Yet Violet maintained that she was to be won with a little patience and tact, and volunteered every assistance in the task.

"No, thanks," was Leycester's final reply; "I decline entering the lists. Her Ladyship may be pleased with my attentions, and might feel the same sort of gratification in calling me her husband, as she would in adding any other admired bauble to her possessions: but *elle ne m'aime pas d'amour*, and I won't be a mere appendage to her state. I want to be petted and fondled, as well as boarded and lodged; and that woman has as much notion of tenderness as a Gorgon. I shall go back to my widow."

"Are you sure of your game, my boy?" asked Dacre, whom he met at the club on his way back through London; and to whom he repeated part of the above declaration. "Are you sure of your game? Because it would ruin your *prestige* to be refused, and, excuse me, but a lady of Mrs. Delamere's age and position, does not marry a young scamp like you, unless she is desperately smitten."

"'Chrétien aux longs yeux bleus,
Dont mon âme est éprise,'"

sang Hyacinth; "that is the Romance Mrs. D. warbles every day of her life. My dear fellow, I have put her to the proof. She *feels* when I come into the room, before she sees me; her

voice alters when she speaks to me; her eyes cannot meet mine. Tell me, '*voi che sapete*,' what these signs portend?"

"We will drink Mrs. Hyacinth Leycester's health in a bottle of champagne," was Dacre's sole response. "What will you do for me, Cherubino, when you become *Le Mari de la Veuve?*" he added, as he set down his empty glass.

"Buy Roderick of you at half the sum you asked Etheredge; and desire my butler to deny my wife to you when I am not at home," answered Hyacinth, eyeing his companion askance as he raised the foaming liquid to his lips.

Dacre took both insinuations as compliments.

"So, so," he cried, with a self-satisfied laugh; "we begin already to anticipate a husband's woes. I should really imagine, my dear boy, that you will have little cause for jealousy."

"Well, I believe I may be tolerably easy on that score," observed Cinthy; as, with his inimitable air of *naïf* conceit, he surveyed his own image in the mirror opposite him. "Besides, jealousy must be very destructive of the complexion. Fancy a yellow Hyacinth!"

"There are such things, nevertheless," mut-

tered Dacre, contrasting with some *dépit* the sharpened outline of his still handsome face and figure, with the youthful graces of his blooming rival.

"So a florist told me yesterday," said Cherubino, overlooking, intentionally or otherwise, the point of the remark. "I must carry some down to Cheltenham with me. Mrs. Delamere is an extensive cultivatress of bulbous roots."

So, indeed, it appeared; her windows were filled with flowers of that species, among which, perhaps from a tender association, hyacinths decidedly predominated. There they stood, in fragrant row, red, white, and blue; to which, "with Mr. Leycester's compliments," two of the rarer yellow variety were one morning added.

"I doubt, after all, if they are so pretty as the commoner sorts," said the donor, when he called to apologise for the liberty he had taken.

"In point of perfume, none are certainly equal to the white," answered Mrs. Delamere; "but I love all hyacinths."

"I am glad to hear you say so," replied Leycester, with one of his most bewitching smiles.

The widow coloured up to the eyes, and strove

to repudiate the interpretation put upon her words; a proof, thought Leycester, that she is conscious of its truth.

"Don't explain away the gratifying avowal," cried he, in a light tone, to which his ardent gaze lent a deeper significance. "My fanciful appellation generally provokes remarks of a less flattering description. Because, for instance, the hyacinth typifies sport, I am never supposed to be in earnest; to say nothing of all the floral impertinences continually showered upon me. I have often vowed to drop the name altogether, and call myself Henry, or Hezekiah."

"That would be a sad pity," observed Mrs. Delamere. "A personage so unique as yourself ought not to be known by too common a designation; and the name you bear is a charming one."

"Can I persuade you to take it?" whispered Leycester, with his most dulcet accent, clasping the widow's hand in one as soft, and bending upon her a glance more eloquent than language.

Psyche, it is said, was doomed to perish if she looked her immortal lover in the face. Anna Delamere, turning hastily to see whether the speaker's countenance belied his tongue, fell

under an influence as potent as that of the God of Love, and lost—her reason!

Half an hour after, Mr. Leycester left the house with an expression of unwonted seriousness upon his physiognomy. Mrs. Delamere, denying herself to other visitors, sat long, absorbed in thought, among her hyacinths, whose parti-coloured bells rang out in silvery tones, the words of their namesake's favourite ditty:

“Vœux-tu mon nom ? Il est à toi.”

“So little Cinthy marries the widow,” was a remark frequently made to Mr. Dacre, when the clubs began to fill.

“So I suppose,” returned that gentleman. “She applied to me the other day for his character, which looks as if she had thoughts of taking him into her service.”

“As Major Domo, I suppose,” said one of the company.

“Or groom of the chamber,” suggested another.

“Some post connected with the stables would be most in Leycester's way,” added a third.

"He might be safely recommended as 'a young man who understands the care of horses, and knows town well.'"

"I should like to have heard Dacre's report of his friend," remarked a fourth, with a strong accent upon the last word.

"I had no motive for slandering him," rejoined Mr. Dacre. "Quite the contrary. Cinthy is a jolly little dog, and will spend his wife's money creditably. I wish he were fonder of play; but with wealth and leisure, he may still acquire the taste."

"Leisure!" repeated the first speaker. "Isn't he idle enough now?"

"No," answered Dacre. "He has that pretty person of his to look after, and can't afford to dim his lustrous eyes by sitting up half the night over the green baize. Once married, you know, his complexion will be of less importance."

"I thought a dissipated look was no disadvantage in female estimation," remarked one of the bystanders slyly.

"Why, no indeed," said Dacre, mechanically facing round to the mirror behind him. "Many women object to that rose-bud style of beauty; it is too much like their own."

"As some people relish preserves more than fresh fruit," returned Mr. Sinclair. "I vow," he added, in an under-tone to his next neighbour, "Dacre's solemn vanity is more amusing than Cinthy's ingenuous self-satisfaction."

"Our dandy-lion has not made a very brilliant match after all," observed Lord Etheredge, laying down the newspaper with a yawn. "Mrs. Delamere is a charming person, and can insure her husband an excellent position; still, the difference of age is a great drawback. I expected Leycester would at least have carried off the Irish heiress, Miss de Courcy."

"You forget the difference of religion, my dear fellow," said Dacre, with a gravity that drew shouts of laughter from his hearers.

"Would he care so much about that, do you think?" asked the young nobleman, innocently unconscious of the ridicule attaching to similar scruples.

"He is quite capable of such a crotchet," replied Sinclair, disdainfully. "Fancy his refusing to play at billiards on a Sunday!"

"That comes of being brought up among women," remarked Dacre, as a sort of apology for his friend's eccentricities. "He disappears

regularly once a week. I used to think he painted, and retired from the world at those intervals to renew his complexion; but I believe he only stays at home and hears the children their catechism. '*Où peut-on être mieux qu'à la poitrine de sa famille ?*' as I heard Lady Wilfred Grafton remark the other day."

"It is all very well, perhaps, when you have a family to fall back upon," said Sinclair; "but for my part I wish the ten years of Sundays that a man of seventy has to drag through, could all come together when one is little, so as to be got over at once."

"If Leycester is so strict a Sabbatarian," put in Captain Lawrance, "how is it he seldom misses the Opera on Saturday nights? to say nothing of an occasional supper afterwards. I never saw him in any hurry to get away before twelve o'clock."

"I asked him once," replied Etheredge, "and he said he considered the day to begin when he got up on Sunday morning. 'Clocks differ,' he added, 'and time is not the same all over the globe. I am not more uneasy about an extra hour or two on what is practically Saturday night, than I should be disposed to rush out to

Pratt's after the last stroke of midnight on Sunday."

"There's some sense in that," said Lawrance approvingly.

"Oh, trust Master Hyacinth for a ready answer."

"I suppose we shall have him in Parliament now he has secured the Delamere interest," observed Sinclair, himself the recently-elected representative of some little fishing village, whose possession of the franchise was its only title to fame.

"Leycester a legislator!" cried several voices at once. "Why, he cares no more for politics than a Jew does for the New Testament."

"Very likely," rejoined the new member; "but the House of Commons, let me tell you, is the best club in London."

"It *was*," said Dacre, who had sat for an influential friend's borough before the Reform Bill. "I recollect in Canning's time—"

"Come and have a cigar, Etheredge," cried Lawrance, making for the door. "When men get back to George Canning, it is not one hour or two that suffices them to exhaust the theme."

CHAPTER IX.

"I would, he lov'd his wife : if he were honester,
He were much goodlier :—Is't not a handsome gentleman?"
ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

WHILE Hyacinth Leycester's friends were divided in opinion upon his rumoured marriage, some considering it a gain, others (ladies especially) a sacrifice, Mrs. Delamere's acquaintance were unanimous in their disapproval. It was true she had no one's pleasure to consult, nor were any one's interests injured by her determination. The only person who had claims upon the fortune wherewith her first husband had so liberally endowed her, was Mary Wentworth, and she was already possessed of an independence in right of her mother, Mr. Delamere's only sister. No disappointed expectations, therefore, added poignancy to the regret with which Mary contemplated the step her aunt was about to take; it was the most sincere regard for the latter's happiness, that made her deplore the change pro-

posed in Mrs. Delamere's present enviable position. Though she had witnessed too many of the earlier stages of the drama to be taken entirely by surprise at the *dénouement*, she was still incapable of comprehending the infatuation which induced the widow to surrender her liberty of purse, action, will, to a good looking adventurer, noted only for elegant follies and *spirituel* impertinence.

The Reverend Mr. Wentworth (Mary's father, and one of the late Mr. Delamere's executors) went much further in his objections, and denounced in vehement terms the culpable weakness of marrying "a profligate young scamp, who would squander, in idle dissipation and debauchery, money that might have been devoted to purposes of the highest utility."

Indiscriminating abuse of the man on whom she had consented to bestow her hand, was not a likely way to detach Anna Delamere. The warmth with which she defended her choice, the pains she took in bringing forward the best traits of his character, and excusing the less favourable ones, served but to deepen the impression he had made upon her.

"We call it barbarous," cried she, "to cast a

slur upon age and sneer at deformity; is it less unjust to pronounce every one devoid of sense and proper feeling, who happens to be young and personally attractive? If it is childish to imagine a necessary connection between vice and ugliness, virtue and beauty, it is a still more absurd prejudice that supposes exterior graces to be incompatible with intrinsic worth. "My peerless Hyacinth," she added, with a proud and fond emphasis on the possessive pronoun, "may prove as amiable a consort as any solemn-visaged, sober gentleman of middle age."

Mary could not help smiling at her aunt's energetic vindication of the villified race of *beaux*. She had herself protested at times against her father's arbitrary way of setting down every man under thirty as "a puppy" and "a blockhead;" for though experience can only be attained by length of years, wisdom is by no means the exclusive property of the old. While admitting, however, the force of Mrs. Delamere's reasoning on this point, she could not shut her eyes to other objections which existed against the match in question. "Can she be so mad," thought Mary, "as to suppose that this Adonis, trained up, by constant adulation, to vanity and selfish-

ness—this dandy, whom even I should deem too young and giddy to be entrusted with my happiness, marries her for love?"

Mrs. Delamere was not blinded to that extent. Hyacinth, with admirable tact, had never risked throwing ridicule on his suit by affecting to speak the language of passion, though he had laboured so successfully to inspire it. Having skilfully prepared the widow not to be startled at his ultimate selection of a wife considerably his senior, he found it comparatively easy to persuade her that she was the person whose society and conversation he preferred. As he had never joined the ranks of heiress-hunters, and was known to have held back in some instances where he did not want encouragement to advance, Anna had some excuse for believing him sincere in his declarations of esteem and attachment, and he professed nothing more in words, though he might occasionally have allowed his eyes to suggest a warmer feeling.

To her faintly-expressed doubts as to the public opinion, he opposed his well-known indifference to such considerations. "Who was ever rewarded for the attempt to please everybody?" he asked. "Why, then, concern yourself about

the whole world's approval, when you are sure of making one man happy?" Argument, indeed, from his lips was almost superfluous; a much more simple use of them settled all difficulties. So complete was the mastery he had obtained over this woman, who, though no longer in the bloom of youth, loved for the first time in her life, that under the charm of his presence, all her scruples vanished; only when that spell was broken, did any misgiving arise in her mind.

To Mary Wentworth, who, with girlish arrogance, regarded her aunt as far beyond the season of romance, this utter subjugation of the judgment to the imagination appeared unaccountable—almost ridiculous. At eighteen (or even at four-and-twenty!) she thought such enthusiasm might be natural enough; but a downright love match at four-and-thirty! and where, too, there was much to be lost, and nothing gained by marrying.

"Nothing to be gained!" cried Anna, answering the latter part of these reflections, which alone Mary's respect for her aunt allowed to be expressed in language. "Is it nothing for a solitary woman to secure a lively and agreeable companion, with whom to share her selfish luxury?

Nothing, for a childless widow to acquire a beloved object on whom to bestow the accumulated hoard of affection, which would otherwise be lavished upon a cat or a parrot? What but a vitiated state of society brings two people together for any other reason than a mutual inclination?"

"And yet, dear Aunt—" Mary began, but stopped short.

"And yet, you would say, my first marriage was not contracted precisely on that principle. You are right, dearest. In my case, however, the inconsistency was involuntary; could I have chosen my lot, how gladly would I have accepted the heart's wealth instead of the purse's; how I yearned for love; how I sickened with the *besoin d'aimer, d'être aimée!* But no lover came. Conscious as I might be of the power to make a husband happy, could I seek one out, and tell him so? Then Mr. Delamere presented himself. He did not realise the dream of my youth; but that youth was passing from me; I was seven-and-twenty, an age when we begin to feel that every year takes something from us; I despaired of exciting, after that period, emotions which I had failed to kindle before; if I rejected this

opportunity of marrying, no other would probably be afforded.

"Why not remain single? you will ask. But marriage to me was perhaps of more importance than to most women. Left an orphan, with no near relatives on either side, I was consigned to the care of a distant kinswoman, who of course felt no very warm affection for me. I had not a word of complaint to make against her; and could not contemplate without dread the complete isolation in which her decease would leave me. But the tepid kind of regard we entertained for each other, the attachment of habit and gratitude, was far from satisfying my ardent nature. Precisely because the blessing was denied me, perhaps, I shared to the fullest extent Jane Eyre's intense longing for kindred; with the exception of my aged protectress, there was no human being on whom I possessed that claim. If I went into society, my solitary condition was still more marked. Miss Granville's age and health precluded her accompanying me; so I had always to seek a chaperone, and experienced the uncomfortable feeling of belonging to nobody. You will understand, my dear Mary, that I had more than ordinary grounds for desiring a home,

a family circle, a position not granted on tolerance, but mine of right.

"Mr. Delamere, though so greatly my senior, had none of the infirmities of age; his intellect and undiminished vivacity procured him a welcome in all companies; his wealth, his connexions, his standing in Parliament, all rendered his proposals very flattering to me. Instead of the visions of love I had cherished, here were at least the means of gratifying ambition. I accepted them, and became his wife. The five years of my married life were happier than I hoped. The house of which I was appointed mistress was frequented by men distinguished in art, literature, and politics: I enjoyed the high satisfaction of repaying civilities bestowed upon me in my obscurity: your good uncle treated me with truly paternal affection, and provided most liberally for my future. To him, indeed, I owe the means of raising, in my turn, to affluence one whom I believe every way calculated to adorn it.

"You think, I see, that success has made me venturesome; and that having so fortunately escaped the mischiefs that are said to accompany a great disparity of years, when the excess is on the husband's side, I am now running a still

greater risk in espousing one too much my junior. I nourish no exaggerated expectations; I do not look for a perfect monster, or an enamoured swain. If my young enslaver reward my more than maternal devotion with something of the affectionate confidence of a son—if he can enjoy the material well-being it will be my pride to secure to him, without repining at the tenure by which it is held, I shall be content."

There was something almost pathetic in this simple history of womanly aspirations and their disappointment, which awoke an answering chord in Mary's breast. She, too, had her vague cravings for sympathy, her yet unrealised Utopia; and though on different grounds from Mrs. Delamere, desired none the less earnestly a home of her own. A second Mrs. Wentworth had replaced the first at Barton Vicarage; and if not amenable to all the charges brought against step-mothers, was sufficiently wrapped up in her own children, and sufficiently influential over her husband, to make his eldest daughter often feel herself *de trop* under his roof. Thanks to Mrs. Delamere, who was very fond of her, to the Maynards, and other friends, she had hitherto enjoyed a pretty frequent ex-

emption from domestic troubles: the marriage of the former, she could not but foresee, would make a great deal of difference to her in this respect, while her hopes from the latter quarter had not yet assumed a definite aspect. The girls, it is true, scarcely concealed their conviction of what was to be, but Arthur had not yet openly declared himself.

It was, therefore, with regret for the loss of so pleasant a house, mingled with forebodings that would not be dispelled as to the lot of its amiable mistress, that Mary arrayed herself in bridal trappings to accompany Mrs. Delamere to the tiny church on her estate in Kent, where the nuptial rites were to be very privately performed. Beyond Lady Wilfred Grafton, Mrs. Leycester, and her two eldest girls, who (in white bonnets, trimmed with crocuses), assisted Mary as bridesmaids, the only witnesses of the ceremony were Mr. Bathurst (who gave the bride away, Mr. Wentworth refusing to attend), Mr. Sinclair, Mr. Dacre, and Lord Etheredge. Mr. Aguilar was the officiating minister; his wife was not in a situation to travel so far.

Anna showed to great advantage in a rich brocade of the palest saffron (Hymen's peculiar

tint): Hyacinth was rather less *paré* than usual, but looked fresh as a rose, and wore in his button-hole a sprig of gardenia, which enabled you to track his movements by its fragrant scent.

The breakfast was a genuine mid-day meal, helping to promote sociability among the guests, not an affair of speech-making and parade. Mrs. Leycester was charmed to make the acquaintance of Mr. Sinclair, who had lately come into a very fine property; Mary had a great deal to say to Mr. Bathurst, with whom she was to return to town that afternoon; Eglantine set up a violent flirtation with young Etheredge; Mr. Dacre occupied himself in drawing out Lady Wilfred, whose air of stateliness, tempered with affability, entertained him vastly. Mr. Aguilar, who always declared that reading aloud made him hungry, found ample amusement in the chickens and tongues; while Veronica sat silently watching her brother, who was, she felt, lost to his own family for ever.

The sensations of Mr. and Mrs. Hyacinth Leycester it is not so easy to pourtray. No doubt all newly-married people feel more or less awkward and uncomfortable; and the couple in

question had more than common reasons for embarrassment. Anna was to the full as much agitated as at her first approach to the altar. She knew now the responsibility she was incurring; and if there are some occasions when the apprehension of evil is more harassing than the calamity itself, there are others when we shrink with added horror from the repetition of pangs already endured. With all her confidence, moreover, in the policy of the measure she had adopted, the reiterated warnings addressed to her recurred with unpleasant distinctness to her memory. Should they unhappily be verified, she must look for no sympathy in her self-imposed trials; ridicule was the only balm society would apply to the griefs of a woman who had made a handsome boy her master.

"Am I indeed drifting out upon the wide ocean of life in a vessel fit only for pleasure?" she asked herself, and sighed.

Her husband turned at the sound; and meeting her eye, drew from his waistcoat pocket the watch now attached to his once useless guard chain, and presented its face to her with a smile. The omen was good; his ear had caught her first sigh, it was hushed by his smile. Gazing with

ineffable fondness into those deep blue orbs, whence all her earthly light henceforth must shine, she rose obedient to his hint, beckoned Mary to attend her, and quitted the room.

Hyacinth himself, with all his assurance, was sorely at a loss how to conduct himself under these novel and very trying circumstances. He had to steer clear on one hand of a hilarity which would have sinned against good taste; on the other, of thoughtfulness which, being unusual with him, might be deemed uncomplimentary to his bride. He could not "play the pretty," with Dacre's sarcastic glance upon him, his better nature forbade the tone of careless levity in which he had been wont to treat the affair; he winced already at the prospect of the raillery he knew himself doomed to undergo. It is but fair to him to state, that his courtship had not been throughout a piece of pure hypocrisy. He had begun it, as we have previously intimated, with no more serious intention than to exercise that power of general fascination, which he possessed in so remarkable a degree. His unmistakeable success in the preliminary stage, first inspired him with the idea of carrying matters further. Having once decided upon taking the field, he had certainly

allowed himself to use every art by which victory was to be obtained; and this less from cool calculation, than from an instinct similar to that of the chase. He flung himself heart and soul into the pursuit, with nearly as much ardour as if love had urged him on; and hailed with a sportsman's exultation the triumphant issue of his toils. Whether the prize be worth the trouble taken to secure it is a question too often put aside for after consideration by hunters and huntresses, besides those who risk their necks in running down hares and foxes.

The banquet, by which all great deeds are celebrated, is, however, a peculiarly unfavourable place for scrutinizing their claims to applause. The part our bridegroom had undertaken to perform must be carried on at least to the end of that act, till the curtain should fall between him and a critical audience. He received the congratulations, sincere or ironic, of the company, his mother's farewell, his sisters' caresses, Mr. Bathurst's solemn bow, Etheredge's hearty slap on the shoulder, the maid-servants' curtsies, the house-dog's rough salute, with his characteristic grace and self-possession; enjoined Veronica to carry home plenty of cake to the children; reminded Dacre, with an arch look, to

give him the refusal of Roderick; cast an approving glance at his wife's rich, but *peu voyant* travelling costume, and stepped lightly into the handsome chariot at the door.

"All right!" cried the valet, as he scrambled to his seat behind. "All right!" shouted the motley group of lookers-on. Hats were taken off, handkerchiefs waved, hands kissed.

"Is all right?" asked Mary Wentworth's boding heart, as the vehicle swept round a curve and disappeared.

"What induced Mrs Hyacinth, I wonder, to adopt such a colour for her bridal raiment," said Lord Etheredge, as Dacre, Sinclair, and he, were on their way back to the not very distant metropolis. "I thought yellow was the emblem of jealousy. Surely she can't be already a prey to that disease."

"Authorities differ as to its interpretation," said Sinclair, "some call it *la couleur des infidèles*, a sense in which she was not likely to sport it. According to others it denotes liberality and enjoyment, which would be appropriate enough."

"Call it gold colour, and the mystery is explained," observed Dacre, with his habitual sneer.

CHAPTER X.

“Un homme d’âge, qui as l’air si respectable que tu paraîtrais bête comme une oie, si on ne connaissait pas tes vertus.”

EUGENE SUE.

“Now, do tell me about this Mr. Hyacinth Leycester,” said Mrs. Bathurst, when she and Mary were left alone together after breakfast. “I am quite curious to hear your account of him, for I can get nothing out of Mr. Bathurst, except that he is a frivolous coxcomb. Is he so very handsome?”

“I am no enthusiastic admirer of his,” answered Mary; “he is not manly enough for my taste. The elaborately curled locks, parted in the centre of the forehead, the pencilled eyebrows, the uncommon vivacity of the eyes, the brilliant complexion, the rosy-tipped fingers, nay, the very accomplishments he displays, have so purely feminine a cast, that but for a score or so of hairs fringing his velvet cheek, I should be tempted to believe that his mother, dissatisfied

with such a tribe of girls, had trained up one of them to pass as a boy."

"Then I am sure I shall not like him," cried Laura. "I detest an effeminate man even more than a masculine woman. The latter errs, by striving to rise beyond her sphere; the former, by sinking himself below his proper level. How came Mrs. Delamere, who you say is a person of superior understanding, to attach herself to such a mere wax doll as you describe?"

"It would be unjust to Mr. Leycester to leave you under that impression," replied Mary. "Were he the shallow-brained fop you suppose, there would have been far less danger in his society. The fact is, however, that if he plays the fool he does it from choice, not from sheer necessity. Nature, indeed, seems to have intended him for a higher career. Had he not been born a beauty, he might have died a distinguished character; and he has a certain charm of manner which disposes the most hostile critic, while under its influence, to judge leniently of his follies. The question is, how long will that spell withstand the wear and tear of daily intercourse? I am not at all afraid of my aunt's being *bored* in his company; what I do fear is, her waking from

her dream of reciprocal affection, to find herself slighted and forsaken by an intriguer, who saw in her no allurement but her gold."

"A sad prospect truly!" sighed Laura. "What Mamma always instilled into me was, that provided a man's principles were sound, it did not signify a pin about his looks and ways, for you would soon get accustomed to them. 'Mutual attachment is a very rare thing,' she used to say; 'better be loved than love.' I would not have married one of those professed lady-killers for the world; for instead of making much of their wives, they expect all the admiration themselves. What is Mrs. Leycester like?"

"My aunt?" returned Mary. "Oh, she is a charming person; something less than beautiful, but more than pretty."

"I shall be introduced, I suppose, when they come to town," said Mrs. Bathurst; "and must write you a full account of the interview; though indeed I reckon upon talking them well over, when you pay me your next visit. I am in great hopes that Mamma and the girls will come up for a month or two this season. Arthur will wish to be in town, and they will not like parting with him during his short leave, so Papa is

to be coaxed into a general move. If they succeed, you must come to me at the same time, and we shall be very jolly together, as Arthur would say."

"My dear Laura, how kind!" exclaimed Mary; and, the young matron being just then summoned away upon some household business, Miss Wentworth, in high spirits, retired to her room to finish the copy she was surreptitiously making of a certain daguerreotype portrait belonging to her hostess.

"Is mutual attachment really so very rare?" thought she, as she pursued her secret labours. The eye that she touched into life, the lip to which she lent expression, seemed to give a silent, but consolatory reply.

Very loath would Mary have been to subscribe to Mrs. Maynard's dictum; very reluctant to believe that married life always wore the tame and spiritless aspect under which it was now presented to her. Mr. Bathurst was regular and methodical in his habits, as might be expected from an old bachelor; precise and formal in his language, as was natural to a lawyer; strict in his ideas of female propriety; less harsh in temper, than austere from temperament; not

insensible, but undemonstrative; and rather proud of his pretty wife, than fond of her. Familiarity with so grave and imposing a personage seemed so much out of place, that Mary was quite startled once at hearing Laura call her husband "William!"

Nor was this the only circumstance connected with that young lady which excited her surprise. On quitting the maiden state, Laura had laid aside also a great deal of that virgin bashfulness on which she had formerly piqued herself, and, as if to exhibit her initiation into mysteries beyond the ken of spinsterhood, discussed her conjugal privileges and maternal hopes with as little reserve as the petty details of her ménage. She, who had never been to a theatre before her marriage, was now crazy to go behind the scenes; and cherished some wild projects of visiting Cremorne.

In spite, however, of this verbal effervescence, she performed her new duties with exemplary expertness and zeal. Though Mr. Bathurst's income placed her beyond the necessity of practising strict economy, yet her excellent management made it go farther than one of larger amount in less skilful hands. She had, until

her promotion, borne the character of "a girl of spirit," by which it was to be understood that she had a will of her own, and knew how to assert it; indeed, a certain tartness of speech had occasionally marked her share in those domestic dialogues which will occur in the best regulated families. But now no unweaned lamb was milder! She said "yes, dear," and "no, dear," to her sombre spouse, with an air of respectful deference, a kind of mental curtsey, at the end of each phrase; apologised for differing from him, consulted his pleasure in the most trifling matters, and was, in short, in all points a model wife.

What magic had effected this striking alteration, Mary could not conceive. It was certainly not love, according to her sense of the word; it could hardly be fear, for Mr. Bathurst, though frigid, was not an ill-tempered man, and did not seem inclined to domineer. Was it a stratagem, to establish, by an appearance of submission at first, a more absolute empire hereafter? Was it due to that singularly regenerating power of matrimony, by virtue whereof many a flighty girl settles down into the steadiest of wives, many an insipid one ripens into the most judi-

cious of mothers? Or, finally, did the change spring from a solemn resolution, taken on opening a new page of life, to fulfil conscientiously the fresh obligations imposed on her?

Laura professed, indeed, a code which Mary thought slavish. She did not dispute the truth of the old maxim,

“One of twa must sure obey;
Is it man or woman, say!”

nor hold any outrageous doctrines touching the rights of women, being well aware that their strength is made perfect in weakness (if the quotation may be so applied without irreverence). She admitted the policy of accommodating oneself to the humours and views of an inevitable companion; she could even understand the pleasure felt by some passionate characters in sacrificing every personal wish or whim to the desires or caprices of the beloved object, *s'effaçant*, as the French express it, to set up another idol on the throne commonly occupied by self. But it had never been her lot (she was no doubt unlucky in her male acquaintance!) to meet with a man of that immeasurable superiority of mind, which should alone claim, and does universally

enjoy, almost despotic sway; a man to whom she could be contented to yield implicit obedience, because she reposed in him unhesitating faith.

"Give me a demigod as a husband," she would exclaim, "and I will be the first to worship him." But when she heard Laura advocate doctrines of passive subjection, which would have done honour to a disciple of Loyola, and talk of surrendering not only her liberty of action, but freedom of opinion, to a self-imposed master, Mary could only smile and say: "*Il faut un peu d'exagération dans les commencemens*, and the excess here is certainly on the right side."

Nevertheless, the impression this visit left on her mind was not altogether a comfortable one. The life Laura led appeared monotonous in the extreme. Her husband's avocations kept him from home the greater part of every day; so that from an early breakfast to a late dinner, she had usually to depend upon her own resources for amusement. Montagu Square was not a lively situation, in winter especially, and she had not yet formed many visiting acquaintances to beguile her leisure. To one accustomed to the freedom of the country, to the bustle of a large

family, and the sociability of a small watering-place, such a change might be supposed rather irksome. Laura, however, did not complain. She was an indefatigable workwoman, had a pretty talent for painting, read a good deal, and nourished a brood of young canaries, while awaiting, as she said, other cares.

Still Miss Wentworth doubted if so unexciting a routine would long suffice the vivacious Laura, and dreaded to think what the consequences would be, if Mrs. Bathurst ever found out that she had a heart. "Most people would consider mine a less susceptible organisation than hers," mused Mary, as the engine whirled her rapidly away from the metropolis; "yet I could not contentedly resign myself to that dull round of petty duties and employments, uncheered by a word, a look of love. It is the sort of lot one accepts with pious resignation when Providence so ordains; not that one chooses when the power of selection is granted; an asylum to which the destitute resort, not the castle built by those rich in youth and hope."

On the same line, a few weeks after, journeyed a couple whose air-drawn designs had already

taken a material shape. The honeymoon had waned, Easter was past, and the newly-married pair were on their way to town, where a spacious house in Park Lane awaited them. Wealth and taste were equally conspicuous in all the arrangements; a competent number of active servants were in attendance to supply the travellers' wants; a *recherché* dinner provoked the appetite it was intended to satisfy. The bride, in a pink watered silk waistcoat (hear it not, shade of the *Spectator!*) and a black velvet jacket with hanging sleeves, which displayed to advantage her fair round arms, did the honours of the establishment to a bridegroom, "*frais comme une rose, blond comme Phébus, et bâti comme si Phidias s'en était mêlé,*" whose lightest caprice seemed to have been studied in the disposition of the apartments dedicated to his special use.

Anything more *coquet* than his dressing-room it was impossible to imagine; the care, indeed, lavished upon the appurtenances of his toilet might almost be taken as a sly satire upon the time he was supposed to bestow upon it. He glanced round upon the rich hangings, the luxurious couches and chairs, the table glittering with the duly-ranged contents of his costly

dressing-case, the choice Landseers on the walls, the rare flowers that bloomed in vases of Bohemian glass; he glanced round, we say, upon these appliances of modern refinement, first with the satisfaction of ownership, then with an uneasy remembrance of the price paid for them. As he stood surrounded by these proofs of the opulence he had coveted, the mirror, which reflected at full length his comely person flashed back on him the reproach, "Slave to the senses! for these gilded toys you have sold yourself."

"It is true," murmured a conscience not wholly seared by vanity and worldliness. "The affection manifested in this attention to all my known or imagined wishes, is not what I sought, is not what I prize, except as adding a keener zest to the substantial advantages of the connexion. I have accepted all that a fond woman can bestow, and have not given so much as an honest heart in exchange. If I have deceived her as to the worth of the consideration offered, I stand convicted of moral fraud; or have I been taken at my own valuation, and *purchased* like any other saleable commodity? Either way, a taste of the metal already mingles with my draught from this golden cup. I begin to weary of the servi-

tude to which I have bound myself, of the part I am hired to play.' Yet the bargain is of my own making," he added, with less bitterness. "It is not for me to quarrel with the terms. My salary has been told down in advance; I cannot now cancel the engagement."

Then rising, with a heavy sigh, from the sofa on which he had thrown himself, he smoothed his brow, and passed out through the door leading to his wife's apartments.

Merciful, indeed, is the veil which hides from us the workings even of the heart nearest our own. For—

"What if Heaven for once its searching light
Lent to some partial eye, disclosing all
The rude bad thoughts, that in our bosom's night
Wander at large, nor heed Love's gentle thrall?
Who would not shun the dreary, uncouth place?
As if, fond leaning, where her infant slept,
A mother's arm a serpent should embrace."

CHAPTER XI.

“ Une femme insensible est celle qui n'a pas encore vu celui qu'elle doit aimer.”

LA BRUYERE.

MARY WENTWORTH looked eagerly for Mrs. Bathurst's promised report of the Leycester ménage. Her aunt's letters from Paris had been evidently written in good spirits, though Anna did not tantalise her spinster correspondent, as younger brides are often inconsiderate enough to do, by declaring that she never knew what happiness meant before: but being chiefly filled with the droll remarks “Cinthy” had made, and the complimentary speeches others had made about him, her epistles did not satisfy her niece's natural anxiety as to the way in which he behaved to her, and the prospect of felicity their domestic intercourse held out. This, in fact, could only be learnt from a third party, having no inducement to disguise the truth.

Nor was Laura, on her side, less eager to give

the desired information. Her curiosity had been excited to the highest pitch by the different accounts she had heard of this Prince of Exquisites, and she waited impatiently for an opportunity of gratifying it. Hyacinth the Irresistible (another of the thousand-and-one sobriquets in which he rejoiced) proved, however, for some time, Hyacinth the Invisible to her. She was introduced to Mrs. Leycester, and exchanged visits with her, but not a glimpse could she obtain of the gentleman. Then she was affronted because he did not call on her, instead of sending his card by his wife. "She had no idea of young men giving themselves such airs," she said. "If ever she had a chance, she should take him down a peg, as she had done others."

At last came an invitation to dinner; and though still firmly bent on administering a lesson to her entertainer (or perhaps in furtherance of her project), she paid on that day more than usual attention to her toilet. The party was to be a friendly one, not demanding much parade; but the simple maize silk was set off by some rich Honiton point, and the handsomest ornaments her trousseau afforded were displayed in honour of the occasion.

Most of the company had assembled when Mr. and Mrs. Bathurst reached Park Lane. The latter glanced round her without being able to fix upon any one as the master of the house. While she was pondering, the door opened, and in walked, unannounced, a gentleman whom she thereby concluded to be Mr. Leycester, though his first words savoured as little of the host as his tardy appearance on the scene:

"I trust I have not kept your guests waiting, Mrs. Leycester," he said, with grave courtesy. "The fact is, I had set my heart upon some lilies of the valley, and have ridden all over London without being able to obtain any."

Anna smiled, and taking from her bosom a sprig or two of the flower in question, pointed to a few more on the table, as she replied:

"My gardener sent up these this afternoon."

"Enchantress!" exclaimed the young man, as he placed the little bouquet in his button-hole; "how did you contrive to make my longing known in Kent since breakfast?"

"I knew your fondness for these lilies, and had ordered an early supply."

Hyacinth looked highly pleased; childishly so, Laura thought; for he was so much taken

up with his fragrant acquisition, that he had no eyes for her. A stiff bow to Mr. Bathurst at his entrance, a rather more cordial one to herself on introduction, was all the notice he had leisure to bestow on either, before dinner was announced. His arm belonged to some other matron, and Laura was placed at table too far from him to have a special claim upon his conversational exertions, though not at such a distance as to prevent his addressing a remark to her now and then, if so inclined.

Cinthy, however, was the worst hand in the world at social formalities; he never troubled himself to go through the string of platitudes about the weather, the opera, and the Great Exhibition, which then made up the staple of drawing-room chit-chat; and was only civil, as it were by stealth. Long accustomed to do the honours of his mother's house, he would have perceived at a glance, and rectified by a word, anything wanting to his visitors' comfort or enjoyment; but to talk to them, help them, take wine with them, &c., was quite out of his line. The little he did say was so *piquant*, that Laura would have been glad to hear more; and in the hope of arousing him from his indifference, she assumed her

sprightliest manner, in discoursing with her immediate neighbour, scattered her most dazzling glances, made abundant use of a small hand, and, in short, put forth an amount of female *agaceries* highly flattering to their object, if his penetration or his conceit—and he possessed an ample share of both—enabled him to divine the motive for this display of strength.

For once in her life, our rural coquette had miscalculated her aim. Cinthy Leycester was an antagonist of a different stamp from any she had yet encountered, and not to be vanquished by the traditional tactics now, for the hundredth time, employed against him by a novice in the art of which he was master. A thorough-bred exquisite, such as the great metropolitan training-school itself only turns out at rare intervals, was a variety of the species quite new to her. Even in externals, he did not correspond with her previously-conceived idea. His countenance betrayed the effeminacy described by Mary, without the vacant expression Laura had been wont to associate with a fop. So likewise his dress, though *soigné* in the extreme, exhibited none of the redundancies she expected to see. The plainest of white waistcoats relieved the

monotony of a gentleman's evening costume; his snowy shirt front displayed no embroidery; his narrow white cravat was tied in the least ambitions of bows; and except some pearl studs of great value, he had not an ornament about him. True, one corner of his perfumed handkerchief bore his crest and initials, beautifully worked; but Mrs. Leycester was responsible for that piece of puppyism.

The ladies retired from the dining-room before Laura had discovered where he was assailable; her object in attempting the conquest being, it will be remembered, not the triumph therefrom resulting to herself—of what avail was that to a married woman?—but the infliction of a humiliation upon him. As soon, however, as the laws of hospitality would permit, he joined the circle upstairs; and now the enemy who had hitherto done nothing but reconnoitre at a distance, advanced of his own accord, and offered her battle.

So little *empressement*, however, was apparent in his manner of addressing her, that she felt small gratitude for an attention dictated solely by conventional politeness. After some prefatory

remarks of a totally insignificant character, he proceeded :

“ I was telling your father, Miss Bathurst—”

“ Mr. Bathurst, sir, is my husband,” interrupted the young matron with great dignity.

“ You astonish me,” drawled Leycester, turning with the utmost unconcern to the glass to arrange his collar; “ I really thought it was your respected parent who came with you. The mistake was natural, you will allow.”

“ I don’t see why,” returned Laura tartly; “ I did not mistake Mrs. Leycester for your mother.”

The retort told: Hyacinth bit his lip, and moved abruptly away. Checking himself instantly, however, he sauntered at his usual pace towards the piano, where his wife, who was looking her very best, had just taken her seat.

“ What shall I sing, dear?” she asked, as he approached.

“ ‘ Time has not thinned my flowing hair,’ ” he answered, as, with a gracious smile at her, and a furtive glance at Mrs. Bathurst, he restored a stray lock to its place on Anna’s well-shaped head.

Mr. Bathurst was getting bald.

"Oh, not that stupid old thing!" cried Eglantine Leycester, who was one of the party. "Let us have 'Trab, trab,' or 'Will you love me then as now?'"

Anna laughed at the amendment; and meeting her husband's gaze, as he composed himself in an arm-chair to listen, she sang the following lines :

"Who shall say that the eye
Soon grows palled with the sight
Of a form oft beheld—
Were't an angel of light?"

"Do we tire of the sun,
Though he shine every day?
Are we blind to the stars?
Yet how changeless their ray!"

"So the light of some eyes
Is as precious to me,
As if each beaming glance
Were the last I should see."

"On the fair face I love,
I for ever would gaze;
No fresh charm could it gain
E'en from memory's haze."

"I did not know you were a poetess, Anna," whispered Cinthy, when she rose from the instrument.

"Are the verses so bad that you attribute them to me?" replied she in the same tone, as,

avoiding his scrutiny, she passed on to entertain Mrs. Bathurst, who sat behind him, trying, perhaps, to recollect if William had ever expressed his regard for her in verse.

Eglantine began proposing riddles.

"What two animals do we all take to bed with us?" asked the volatile young lady, with her habitual titter

"Two does (to doze), perhaps?" hazarded one of the company.

"I should hope one was a bird of prey (pray)," suggested Anna.

"If birds are reckoned animals, what do you think of the eider duck?" said Lord Etheredge:

"Too obvious by half," observed Mr. Bathurst. "I should guess one to be a puppy, but that the answer would, fortunately, admit only of a partial application."

Mrs. Hyacinth coloured; Mr. Hyacinth calmly bided his time.

"Do you all give it up? Well, then, a pair of calves," said Eglantine, in high glee.

"That solution, I am sure, does not always hold good," remarked Leycester, raising his mischievous eyes from the floor, and dropping them full upon the lawyer's lower limbs.

Mr. Bathurst was rash to provoke comparisons; his spare, angular figure showed in disadvantageous contrast with the supple, rounded limbs which his rival, stretched out nearly at length upon a sofa, seemed almost ostentatiously to display. Two minds, at least, followed in the direction of Hyacinth's shaft; Laura with a twinge of dissatisfaction, Anna with a flush of pride. Cinthy read the last in his wife's face, and repaid it with a glance, that thrilled right through one woman's soul, and caused a vague unknown sensation in the other's.

"If you like, Anna, we will sing 'Tornami a dir,'" said Hyacinth the Irresistible; and without quitting his seat, he bore his part in that tender strain with a voice admirably calculated to give it due effect.

That evening was a blissful one to Anna Leycester; never had her young husband appeared so affectionate. What if she had known that the impassioned gaze, on which she lived for months, was prompted partly by gratified vanity, partly by a wanton desire to disturb another woman's peace?

Poor Laura, thoroughly uncomfortable without understanding why, wrote off an account of the

party next day to Mary, pronouncing Mr. Leycester the most insufferable of men, and expressing her surprise how any woman of sense or taste could tolerate his affectation and impertinence. It was some consolation to reflect that she had checked him rather sharply when he tried to play off his vagaries upon her.

Hyacinth's opinion of Mrs. Bathurst was thus expressed: "She is not so pretty as she thinks herself, nor so *spirituelle* as she wishes to be thought. Her nose got red after dinner, her fingers are stumpy, she opens her eyes too wide, and is often pert when she means to be witty."

"How could you possibly note all these particulars?" exclaimed the wondering Anna. "You scarcely seemed to bestow common attention upon her."

"One can see without looking sometimes," answered Leycester.

And, indeed, this species of second sight, possessed by him to a remarkable extent, was one of the secrets of his great success in the world. He had found no trouble in taking Mrs. Bathurst's measure, and promised himself some amusement in subduing "that little scorpion," as he termed her; to which end he set aside his dislike to her

husband, and tacitly encouraged Anna to cultivate their acquaintance.

No bitterness mingled with his recollection of Laura's remark; it was not in his nature to bear malice, and he admitted having thrown the first stone; yet, in twitting him with the manifest seniority of his wife, she had touched upon a very tender point. He, so careless in general of the public voice, was nervously susceptible in this one particular. It required all his self-command not to betray the vulnerable part, at which a thousand archers, he knew, were ready to let fly; but he often winced in secret under attacks he affected to laugh off, or to disdain. Hyacinth, in fact, was a little too good for a professed man of the world, though not quite good enough for anything better. Renouncing the higher aspirations, the more generous emotions of youth, he had coolly traded upon his personal gifts, and ignobly consented to owe everything to a wealthy partner; but he had the grace to feel somewhat ashamed of his position. Yet it was this redeeming feature in his case which he was most anxious to conceal; his precocious experience having taught him that Wrong, to be successful, must wear the bold front of con-

scious Right. An audacious sinner is too often popularly preferred before a half-hearted saint; but to sin, and to doubt about it too, is a state of things meeting small sympathy or toleration from either side. Once enlisted, therefore, in the service of Mammon, Leycester could not afford to keep, or at least to exhibit, a conscience, and braved, with an unclouded brow, the railery he encountered, while he inwardly suffered the torments of all those who "halt between two opinions."

From this conflict of ideas proceeded the inconsistencies observable in his conduct towards the lady he had invested with his name. The fear of ridicule rendered him loath to be much seen with her in public, and the necessity of asserting his independence of conjugal control, forbade his relinquishing all at once his bachelor habits and companions; yet he would not allow contemptuous pity to take the place of that curiosity, with which society at first watched the fortunes of his wife. All *persiflage* derogatory to her, he checked at the outset with a determination which showed him in earnest; while nothing drove him to her side more surely than any imputation of neglect or unkindness. The

wits of the Coventry were early silenced by the remark :—“ Let me remind you that the lady in question is my wife,” made to the first offender in Hyacinth’s quietest tone, but accompanied by a glance, the meaning of which was not to be mistaken. So again when in his stall at the opera, he overheard some criticism upon the lonely condition of Mrs. Leycester in her box, he made his way up there between the acts, and showed himself an assiduous cavalier for the rest of the evening.

It was of a piece, perhaps, with eccentricity like his to be thus piqued into good behaviour; but little dependence could be placed on such a motive, and there was too much reason to fear that he might hereafter wreak upon her in private the annoyance he endured on her account abroad. With an ill-tempered man this would have been the inevitable result of his false position, and hence, no doubt, proceeded an occasional irritability which had not been previously reckoned among Cinthy Leycester’s faults.

Yet there was no one easier to live with than his unappreciated consort. Amiable both by nature and on principle, and devotedly attached to him, she was neither indifferent to such at-

tentions as he paid her, nor exacting of them when withheld. Without surrendering entirely the disposal of her ample fortune—a concession indeed, which he had had too much delicacy to require—she had settled on him a most liberal portion, and asked nothing better than to employ the remainder for his gratification. A suite of rooms on the ground floor were appropriated to his sole use, so that he could go in and out at all hours of the day and night, and receive whatever visitors he pleased, without question or comment. Never was a handsome husband less teased by petty jealousy; never did a rich wife exert so inoffensively the power of the purse.

If there were moments when all Anna's blandishments could not soothe the waywardness of her spouse, all her sagacity could not anticipate his caprices, at least he never mortified her by an open slight, nor sinned against that good taste which was, alas! his only standard of propriety. Those who had expected him to plunge into a career of reckless extravagance, were astonished at his moderation. He neither emptied all the tailors' and jewellers' shops in London, nor lighted his cigar with bank notes. His first care on coming into the possession of ready money,

was to discharge with religious fidelity every outstanding claim against him; his next, to set about the formation of a stud. Mrs. Leycester's equipage was soon quoted as perfection, while Hyacinth's steeds, no longer borrowed, were the wonder of the Row. This was the only sudden change he allowed to appear in his expenditure, for the elegancies in which he delighted were rather felt than seen.

He played and betted more freely than of yore, and made parties of his own to Epsom and Ascot, instead of joining other people's; but he was not to be "done" into lending money to any spend-thrift that asked him, or supporting with hard cash every sharper who credited him with soft brains. The other less ostensible methods in which young men are wont to squander money, were not in his line: courted in the boudoir, he kept rather aloof from the *coulisses*; and if he could not (like a certain danseuse-loving nobleman) take "Virtute" as his motto, so neither did he blazon "Opera" upon or within his panels.

It was fortunate for Mrs. Leycester that his tastes were, on the whole, so reasonable, and so easily satisfied; for had he been ever so waste-

fully inclined, she would not have had courage to check the propensity. She could not have refused his most exorbitant request, while an angry word or look from him would have haunted her memory for life. Far from thinking that a man accustomed to support an appearance upon a hundred pounds a year, might very well confine his desires to a thousand, she was always afraid his private income was insufficient, and whenever he was captious or fretful, she imagined it to arise from a want of money. Numerous were then the artifices she employed to ascertain the fact without forcing him to confess it. Sooner than he should have to drop a hint so revolting to a man of any spirit, she would feign to discover a large balance at her banker's, and entreat his assistance in getting rid of the surplus.

"Young men could always find a use for spare cash. Were there no unparalleled cigars to be secured? no faultless hunters waiting a purchaser?"

Hyacinth was truly grateful for such instances of consideration, and shewed it in many little ways which none knew better than himself how to employ. Anna was tempted to believe she-

"Indeed!" cried Mrs. Leycester.

"That need not alarm you on Miss Wentworth's behalf," continued Hyacinth. "Of all the flowers of the family, our Wild Rose bears the closest resemblance to her mother, who accordingly imagines that no man can look at the young lady without falling instantaneously and irretrievably in love. Whether it be a withered veteran, or a beardless youngster, a knowing old stager, like Dacre, or a raw novice, like this Mr. Maynard, a hard-headed capitalist, like Sinclair, or a racket Guardsman, like Lawrence, a gay lordling, like Etheredge, or a grave clergyman, like Aguilar, all are supposed to be equally victims of my fair sister's charms; yet she has never had a *bond fide* proposal."

"At nineteen she has still time before her," said Mrs. Leycester. "But apropos of Mr. Aguilar, did you not receive a letter from him this morning? I hope his wife is going on favourably."

"She is 'as well as can be expected,'" replied Cinthy, "and the 'angelic stranger' is of course the finest baby ever born. There's his epistle, which in fact concerns you more than me, for he asks me to stand godfather to the infant, which

is equivalent, I suppose, to asking you to stand something handsome in the shape of a present to it. *I* have no money to throw away upon miniature cutlery."

"The child will be christened Hyacinth, of course?"

"Not a bit of it. My name is not saintly enough for my reverend brother-in-law, though it may be found in the calendar. The boy is to be Ambrose, on whose day he was born, or to whom his father's church is dedicated, or some such cogent reason, as you will find set down in his rescript. And better so; there could not be two Hyacinths in bloom at once. And that reminds me — Will you have the goodness to ring the bell? Tell my man," he continued, to the servant who answered the summons, "to give you the small morocco-case he will find in the pocket of one of the coats I wore yesterday."

The case was brought, and proved to contain a handsome bracelet, shaped like a wreath of hyacinth blossoms, formed of flame-coloured stones, with leaves and stems of gold.

"When I was at Turner's the other day," he went on, "he showed me some of these hyacinths

unset. They are of no great value, but I had this made to show you that I am a gem as well as a flower."

"My dear Cinthy! how beautiful! I recognize your taste in the device."

"I don't think I ever made you a present before," remarked Leycester. "It would have been absurd to be giving you of your own; but this trinket was bought out of my own private earnings."

Mrs. Leycester looked surprised, as well she might.

"Yes," he asseverated; "I won the money of Dacre in a wager."

"I am not sure whether that explanation enhances the worth of the gift," said Anna, hardly repressing a smile at her husband's notion of honest gains. "Have you no scruples about depriving Mr. Dacre of a sum which perhaps he can ill afford to lose?"

"*Au contraire*, my beloved, I experience intense enjoyment in extracting cash from that careful gentleman's pocket. Shylock had not more affection for his ducats than Dacre for his shillings."

"He does not bear the character of a miser."

“Nor is he one, in the common acceptation of the term. He denies himself none of the good things of life, lives in sumptuous apartments, belongs to the most expensive clubs, and indulges freely in every fashionable extravagance; it is not the fear of diminishing his income that possesses him, but a dislike to part with the actual coin. I have known him in one day agree to give a hundred pounds for a horse he could not mount, and cut short his ride sooner than pay threepence to go through a turnpike. That is why it amuses me to lighten his purse, especially as he does not scruple to replenish it by ensnaring less sharp-witted youngsters than myself. But let us see how the bracelet looks upon your arm.”

As he stooped over the clasp, Anna imprinted a kiss upon a little slip of “*rosea cervia*” left visible between his collar and the roots of his hair. It was a weakness, perhaps; but Queen Elizabeth was guilty of a somewhat similar one, and she is generally considered to have been a strong-minded woman.

CHAPTER XII.

“ No marvel then he was a favourite ;
A full-grown Cupid, very much admired ;
A little spoilt, but by no means so quite ;
At least he kept his vanity retired.”

* * * * *
“ The Duchess of Fitz-Fulke, who loved tracasserie,
Began to treat him with some small agacerie.”

BYRON.

IN MRS. BATHURST's account of her first meeting with Hyacinth Leycester, one sentence made a peculiarly strong impression upon the friend to whom the letter containing it was addressed. “ There was also present,” wrote Laura, “ the beautiful Miss Leycester, about whom Arthur used to rave when he returned from Cheltenham last autumn.” Over this passage Mary pondered in alarm. She was aware that he had remained at Cheltenham some little time after she left it; but it had never occurred to her before that he might have employed that interval in cultivating his acquaintance with the Leycesters. His other sisters had not alluded to

any *penchant* in that quarter; but then they, having better reason than Laura to suspect the state of her affections, would naturally be more guarded in communicating what might cause her uneasiness. Much as she longed to obtain more explicit information, she could not trust herself to make the necessary enquiries. The dissimulation which seems incumbent upon women in these cases, forbade her exhibiting the slightest interest in a subject which absorbed all her thoughts. Not till this casual remark checked the current of her meditations did she perceive with what resistless force it had been bearing her on; not till it was suggested that another might be the object of his idolatry, did she comprehend how irrevocably her hopes were fixed on him. Thrown back upon herself, with no new faces to distract her memory, she had indulged a sentiment until it deepened into a passion; and was conscious of its maturity only when it became expedient to check its growth.

The visit to London, so eagerly anticipated, had now lost its charm. When the definite invitation arrived, her first impulse was to decline it, and save herself the pain of witnessing his devotion at a newer shrine. But besides the

trouble of inventing a plausible excuse, Reason told her that there was no way of ascertaining the truth so satisfactory as personal observation, while Hope whispered the effect her presence might produce in recalling him to his allegiance, if he had swerved from it, which, after all, was by no means certain.

Mary entertained no exaggerated opinion of her own merits, but she could not affect ignorance of her mental superiority to Eglantine Leycester; and from the insight she had acquired into Arthur's character, she honestly believed herself more capable of promoting his happiness than her fairer rival. Recollecting the pleasure he used to take in her society, the interest she had sometimes awakened in him in higher topics than those of the hour, she could scarcely credit his deliberate preference of a girl reputed even by gentlemen to be so insipid, that it was hard work to get through a quadrille with her.

"I could more easily resign my pretensions," thought Mary, "to a woman I thought worthier of him. But will the pretty Miss Leycester, the flower of the ball room, who sees in him only one among a hundred admirers, appreciate his virtues, humour his weaknesses, and smooth

over his defects, as I think I should have done, who have studied him thoroughly, and love him so well?"

When Arthur Maynard and she first met in town, it certainly appeared to her that his manner was colder than it had been at Cheltenham. Subsequent intercourse restored so much of their former tone, that Mary began to fancy the unpleasant impression arose from a preconceived idea on her part. The cordial greetings of his family assured her she had lost no ground with them; yet in the society she now frequented, Arthur's name was so often coupled with Eglantine's, that she could not doubt his having at least carried on a flirtation in that quarter.

The day after her arrival in town, Anna called, accompanied by Hyacinth, to Mary's surprise, and Mrs. Bathurst's intense disgust, he having never vouchsafed to pay her the compliment of a personal visit. He was, however, in so affable a mood that the coldness of her reception did not at all disconcert him; perhaps he saw in it a proof that his comings and goings were not a matter of complete indifference to her. Certainly a glory seemed to stream into the small and somewhat dingy apartment when he stepped

into it, bringing the delicious perfume of sweet peas along with him. Mary had never thought him so handsome; it was a real treat to see anyone look so fair and fresh that hot, dusty day. One thing puzzled her. The gentleman (barring the sweet peas) was in slight mourning; black coat, lavender gloves and tie, narrow band of crape round the hat, &c., while the lady exhibited none of the trappings of woe.

"How do you explain this difference?" she asked, calling Anna's attention to the fact.

"How do you account for the changes of the wind?" returned Anna smiling. "It is a whim of the Sultan's; he puts himself into half-mourning now and then, under the idea that it looks gentlemanlike. But à propos of that Eastern designation, Mary, we are going to a fancy ball shortly, and I want him to adopt that character. Would it not suit him admirably?"

"So far as sitting on cushions, with a long pipe in his mouth, viewing Frank Bayadéres dance—yes; but such a complexion was never seen under a turban, while his eyes are too blue and too wide-awake for an Oriental. You must carry your imagination a little south of Constantinople, and make an Apollo of him. Con-

ceive a crown of sun-beams surmounting those golden locks."

"His profile is not classic enough for the Greek deity. He rather inclines to the Charles II. costume."

"Which is, I fear, but too well suited to him," thought Mary.

Hyacinth, who, during this interval had been playing the agreeable, after his fashion, to Mrs. Bathurst, now joined the conversation, of which he had caught a word or two.

"You are talking of the fancy ball," he said. "I am bent upon appearing as a Nubian slave; so little outlay would be required upon the dress."

Laura looked shocked at the bare suggestion; Mary laughed outright.

"Are you going to Lady Macarthy's?" continued Leycester.

Laura shook her head with a half-sigh.

"No? How you shut yourself up! One never meets you anywhere. Why don't you show in the Park sometimes?"

"You forget, Mr. Leycester, that I am a very unfashionable person, and boast no carriage," replied Mrs. Bathurst, with an air which implied

her sense of the sacrifice she was making to candour.

"If that is all," cried Hyacinth, who had never been *géné* by that kind of pride, "ours is quite at your service. Mrs. Leycester will be delighted to drive you out whenever you please; will you not, madam? Not to-day, though, because I am going myself," he added, again addressing Laura; "and I should be obliged to give you up the front seat, a disinterested proceeding to which I am not equal. Good morning."

And he departed, leaving Mrs. Bathurst uncertain whether she admired or detested him most; a state of things which compelled her to devote a good deal of consideration to the subject.

"My dear Cinthy," said Mrs. Leycester, in a tone of remonstrance as they descended to the hall, "will you never learn to behave with ordinary decorum? It is all very well for you to say such things to your duchesses, who can afford to laugh at your impertinences, but poor Mrs. Bathurst does not understand your privileges, and may take offence at their exercise."

"I must owe you the twopence for this week's

instruction in manners," observed Hyacinth, affecting to feel in his pockets for the coppers he was sure not to find. "Shall I go back and apologise?" he continued, stopping at the foot of the stairs with so serious a show of meaning it, that his wife was glad to relinquish the attempt to reform him, and lead him away peaceably to the carriage, in which he sank down nearly at full length.

"Really, Anna," he said, as they drove off, "it would be a charity on your part to give that little woman an airing now and then. How dull she must be by herself all day! Even Bathurst's company must be welcome after ten hours of solitary confinement, with smoking prohibited. I might have been a flourishing wine merchant by this time, if consideration for your feelings had not induced me to decline business."

While uttering which bold fiction, he languidly acknowledged the somewhat eager salute of the beautiful Mrs. Fitzmaurice, who passed on horseback.

"Why has Mr. Leycester left off the red ribbon he used to wear round his neck?" asked the fair equestrian.

"Because he is no longer for sale, I suppose," responded Dacre, who rode by her side.

"You don't mean that he is married?"

"He really is reduced to that extremity."

"Then the lady in whose barouche he was lolling was his wife?"

"She enjoys that titular distinction."

Mrs. Fitzmaurice found something very much amiss with her stirrup leather, which absorbed her attention during the next five minutes. When she spoke again it was to enquire the particulars of the marriage, which had taken place during her residence abroad.

"It was not a love match, then?" she observed, with a sigh, as it appeared, of relief, when the information had been supplied.

"A love match!" repeated Dacre, with a sardonic laugh. "Can you, who knew him so well, conceive Cinthy Leycester in love with anything but his own pretty person?"

"True, true," murmured the lady.

And putting her horse into a canter, she broke off the conversation.

Mrs. Fitzmaurice belonged to that class of English society which is so great an enigma to foreigners; a woman of high birth and fashion,

married to a man with equally aristocratic connexions and large fortune, yet neither possessing any ostensible rank to indicate their pretensions. Nature had certainly done her best to stamp the former as a leader of ton, so queenly was her carriage, so majestic the style of her beauty. Tall and finely formed, with arms white as those of Juno, an ear tinted like the shell in which Venus rose from the waves, and a diadem of bright chesnut hair encircling her lofty brow, she commanded the admiration of all who gazed upon her; and when she cared to lay aside the haughty demeanour which kept the crowd aloof, no one could resist the witchery of her smiles. This power of fascination she wielded in the most arbitrary manner, selecting her victims without the slightest regard to the previous claims of their respective wives or mistresses, and proving herself as careless of the misery she inflicted on those she forsook, as on those she caused to be forsaken. Many a young matron mourned over the domestic happiness destroyed by those fatal charms; many a man cursed the infatuation which had led him to renounce some trusting heart for the blandishments of a syren.

In the favour of this imperious and fickle dame, whose brilliantly bold career might well have beseemed the court of a Louis XIV., Hyacinth Leycester, handsome, petulant, refined, and unprincipled, the very impersonation of the Page of that period, had stood very high, maintaining his ground against powerful rivals, as much by the piquancy of his address, as by the freshness of his youthful bloom. He possessed a happy knack of presenting himself under so many different aspects, that his admirers had not time to grow weary of any, and found "variety in one." He could be witty, sarcastic, indifferent, sentimental, tender, impassioned, as the case required; and by making it a matter of utter uncertainty in which of these moods he might be found at any given moment, he managed to keep alive for a lengthened period the interest he inspired. Mrs. Fitzmaurice was, in fact, as completely under his influence as she fancied him under hers; she took patiently at his hands caprices she would not have endured from anyone else, and had never suffered her fiery temper to banish him beyond recall. Her departure on a lengthened Continental tour—some said at Mr. Fitzmaurice's express recommendation—had

broken off the intimacy; and Leycester soon consoled himself for the rupture of the temporary liaison.

The object of his transient homage had of course nothing to hope from his fidelity; had she been free to accept his hand, she would probably have rejected it; yet it was with a secret pang she now heard of its bestowal upon another. With the singular selfishness of coquetry, she envied Anna a possession she did not covet for herself. Hyacinth was to have remained single for her sake, to have continued her devoted servant as long as her partiality for him lasted, and then to have subsided into a mere bowing acquaintance, without resentment and without *éclat*.

Dacre perceived the effect of his communication, and took advantage of it to further his own views. Never had his efforts to please been so successful; the accession of a new courtier was doubly welcome when following so quickly upon the withdrawal of an old one, for without excitement of this kind, Constantia Fitzmaurice could not live. Too truly has it been said that a woman who once indulges a thirst for "stolen waters," is never contented with a single draught. Had she forgotten that terrible moment when

the stripling with whose feelings she had played till she woke the chord of passion in his breast, rose suddenly into the impetuous man, and standing before her with kindling eye and quivering lip, demanded the reward of his long servitude: when she, acknowledging her master in the spirit she had evoked, and fascinated, as is the fate of her sex, by the strong will before which she trembled, hung in breathless suspense between the shame of yielding and the dread of losing him for ever? Or did these fierce conflicts and struggles render all the ordinary pleasures and duties of life so tame and unsatisfactory, that she longed for a renewal of them?

By whatever motive animated, she now listened graciously to the skilfully-insinuated gallantries of Mr. Dacre, who was so elated with his partial success, that he could not refrain from boasting of it to the rival he hoped to supplant.

"My poor Benedict," he said, the next time they met, "that unlucky marriage of yours has undone you. Queen Constance will never look your way again."

"Did she tell you so?" asked Leycester, with his usual nonchalance.

"Not in so many words, but I read it in her face."

"Is she here to-night?" enquired Hyacinth, raking the boxes with his opera glass.

"Yes, in the grand tier, the third from the stage," answered Dacre, acknowledging with much *empressement* a slight inclination from that quarter.

"Alone, too!" cried Cinthy; "I shall go and pay my respects."

"You will not be welcomed."

"What do you bet me?"

"Oh, I have no intention to stake my money upon anything so variable as a woman's humours. Besides, unless I were present at the interview, I could not ascertain the style of your reception. You might make out any story you pleased."

"A most unfair reflection upon my veracity. I am not given to vaunt my *bonnes fortunes*," returned Hyacinth laughing, with a slight stress upon the pronoun.

"Do you mean, sir, to imply—" began Dacre, reddening with anger.

"Nothing, upon my honour," interrupted

Cinthy, bowing with mock humility. "I am aware that you are a dead shot."

And amid the subdued merriment of the little group of listeners, he threaded his way out of the stalls, appearing soon after in Mrs. Fitzmaurice's box. His reception was certainly frigid enough; but his practised eye discerned between the coolness of pique and that of indifference, and he stood his ground.

"I did not expect to be thus favoured," said the lady in her most distant manner, betraying at the first word the real cause of her resentment. "It seems you are now a married man."

"I know your strict ideas of conjugal decorum," replied the gentleman; "but my wife, having unlimited confidence in my discretion, allows me considerable freedom of action."

"I confess I am curious to see *your* wife. She is much older than you, I am told."

"About your age, though not quite so handsome," was the ready rejoinder.

"You are very fond of her, of course," sneered Mrs. Fitzmaurice.

"Of course," repeated the imperturbable

Hyacinth; "at least, she is very fond of me, which is more to the purpose."

"Poor woman!" ejaculated Constantia. "It is, perhaps, as well you settled when you did," she resumed, after a moment's pause. "The young Marquis of Wells, whom I met abroad, and who has just come of age, will quite cut you out."

"Do you find me looking at all *passé*?" asked Leycester, so innocently, that his companion's gaze was involuntarily directed to his handsome countenance. "I hear your marquis is dull beyond belief. '*Il abuse du privilège qu'ont les beaux hommes d'être bêtes,*' as that clever French-woman said, or would have said, had she been acquainted with Lord Wells."

The lady's scornful lip relaxed into a smile. Leycester saw his advantage, and profited by it. Turning the conversation into a strain of light, caustic gossip, he made himself so amusing, that when Dacre followed him up-stairs, Mrs. Fitzmaurice looked half annoyed at the interruption.

"You are not going?" she said in honeyed accents, as Hyacinth rose to resign the post of honour to the new comer.

THE GREAT EXTRAVAGANT.

"Common party," answered he, adopting his
style operatic. "Il mio tesoro intanto si sta
Hanno di Comune, whence she must now be
crying, 'Giacinto, insolano!'"

"She is a politician, then?"

"Not more than becomes a woman; but she
studies such matters on my behalf, in case I
should think of entering public life."

"A pretty legislator you would make."

"Why not? Dacre got returned twice; you
don't mean to say he is a cleverer fellow than I
am?"

And without waiting for the reply, he left
Her Majesty's Theatre for St. Stephen's, whither
Mrs. Leverett had accompanied her niece and
Lizzy Hesburgh.

CHAPTER XIII.

"He has a solid base of temperament :
But as the water-lily starts and slides
Upon the level in little puffs of wind,
Tho' anchor'd to the bottom, such is he."

THE PRINCESS.

HYACINTH LEYCESTER's first visit to Montagu Square was not his last. Miss Wentworth's residence there caused a great augmentation of the intimacy previously existing. If Mrs. Leycester called to take out her niece, she could not avoid offering a place in her barouche to that niece's hostess. Once or twice, Hyacinth bestowed his society upon them, and at each interview, the singular power of fascination with which he was gifted, drew Laura more closely towards him. After manifesting the most provoking indifference long enough to convince her of the utter futility of her attempts to enslave him, he applied himself now to the familiar task of establishing his empire over her; and so well

covered were his approaches, so little did his method of ingratiating himself resemble that of common swains, that Laura had not the least suspicion of his design.

She had, as we have intimated, been brought up in the worship of the goddess Reason. In the choice of a husband—one of the important cases in which a woman is called on to decide her own destiny—her judgment had been alone consulted, to the exclusion of the heart and the imagination; faculties, however, the neglect of which, in dealing with the female mind, is as dangerous as was, “once upon a time,” the omission of any one particular fairy at the baptism of a princess. To love, and to dream (at least with waking eyes) were verbs which she had never been allowed to conjugate; the latter operation being only connected in her ideas with a heavy supper, the former with a circulating library.

It was reserved for Hyacinth Leycester to convince her that the brook over which she had leaped in scorn, as it rippled through the meadows of her home, might one day swell into a broad and rapid stream, capable of fertilizing the countries through which it flowed, capable

of sustaining mighty vessels laden with earth's treasures, and capable also of engulfing all that was embarked upon its waves. In him she saw the enchanted prince, appointed to arouse her dormant soul; but because the waking from her trance was productive of a strange and painful sensation, she believed it was dislike, and not interest, he inspired. Not dazzled at first sight, but won over by slow degrees to the acknowledgment of his personal graces, she imbibed, in imperceptible but repeated doses, the sweet poison which is often more dangerous so administered, than in larger draughts.

Originally mortified by his nonchalance, and afterwards proportionately flattered by attentions which she had ceased to regard as matters of course, she fell unconsciously into the habit of attaching importance to his looks and words; her spirits varied according to his demeanour, without its ever occurring to her to ask herself why she was elated by his smiles, or depressed by his neglect. Had she foreseen her danger, she would have guarded against it; but how was she, in her simplicity, to guess that the man whose mere presence acted like a spell upon her, checking the natural buoyancy of her spirits,

and blunting the sharpness of her tongue; how could she guess, we say, that this man, who never stooped to win her favour, nay, whose careless arrogance so often wounded her pride, and in whom her judgment found nothing to approve, had nevertheless taken her fancy captive, and was in a fair way of becoming the master of her heart?

"I hope Mr. Leycester will not be at home," she would say to Mary, when they went to call in Park Lane. "I like Mrs. Leycester extremely, and get on very well with her alone; but when he is present I always feel awkward and constrained."

"I don't see anything so awful about him," returned Mary, laughing. "His oddities amuse me, though I cannot say I like him the better for them."

"I wish you could contrive to sound her, Mary, about coming to us one evening. You know she was kind enough to mention something about asking Mamma and my sisters to her ball, and said she should be happy to make their acquaintance beforehand. I should like to invite her to meet them at dinner in a friendly way; but I could not think of having that husband of

hers; he is such a dreadful quiz! I should be in such a state for fear of anything going wrong. And yet it looks rather strange to ask one without the other."

"Well, really," cried Mary, "I think Mr. Hyacinth need not hold himself above partaking civilities that are offered to my aunt."

Miss Wentworth's logic was bad, *parvenus* being precisely those who are least indulgent towards their inferiors in rank, wealth, or fashion. But in the conduct they expected from him, both ladies did Cinthy injustice. He had outraged Violet's feelings by declaring he was bored at Broadwater House, and might have criticised the arrangements at Buckingham Palace, if he had ever been honoured with a command to the royal table; but no amount of temptation would have provoked a smile from him at the expense of those who, less confident of their position, might take it in evil part; and this, not because he had once put up with humble accommodation, but because he was perfectly well-bred. Marriage had not raised him in the social scale, but simply placed him on a pecuniary level with those of his own rank.

Mrs. Leycester was not at home; so Laura's

difficulties had to be insinuated in a letter, which Mary undertook to write. Anna smiled as she read it, at the idea of the fastidious Hyacinth doing duty at a family party in Montagu Square, and would have hardly thought it worth while to consult him upon the subject, had he not been half asleep on her lap when the note arrived. To answer it, she was obliged to deprive him of the pillow he had chosen; whereupon he woke up and demanded an account of the business in hand.

“Mrs. Bathurst is desirous I should dine with her on Saturday, to be introduced to Mrs. Maynard and her daughters. I suppose you have no objection?”

“I don’t think my fortitude is equal to the trial,” replied he, lazily stretching himself on the deserted sofa.

“It need not be tested. The invitation only concerns me.”

“You don’t mean to say that she hasn’t invited me?” cried Hyacinth, starting bolt upright. “Unprincipled woman! thus to sow the seeds of disunion beside the domestic hearth! What have I done to be so slighted?” he pursued, in a lamentable tone, sinking back upon his couch, as if overwhelmed with grief.

After a moment's reflection, Mrs. Leycester tossed him Mary's epistle; he perceived at a glance how the case stood.

"Well, Cinthy, what shall I say?" she asked.

"Say—a—that I—that you—or, stop; push me over that apparatus; I'll write myself."

"Now, don't scribble nonsense," implored his wife, heedless of whom, Cinthy possessed himself of a pen, and wrote as follows:

"DEAR MISS WENTWORTH,

"As this prandial negociation is, it appears, like an affair of honour, too delicate a matter to be intrusted to the persons concerned, I, in the capacity of Mrs. Leycester's friend, cannot sanction her going out anywhere, or meeting anyone, unattended by me. If, therefore, your principal wishes the satisfaction of the lady's society, she must take it with the drawback of the gentleman's into the bargain.

"To obviate as much as possible the objections Mrs. Bathurst may entertain towards me, be pleased to inform her that, though a Sultan (such, I find, is the title you have conferred upon me), I do not eat with my fingers, but use a

knife and fork, like a Christian. Also, that I do not take up much room, that my appetite is not inordinately large, and that I will undertake to quit the premises at ten o'clock, or sooner, if desired. Hoping you will employ your influence on my behalf, I remain (by anticipation),

“Gratefully yours,

“H. LEYCESTER.”

This rejoinder, of course, called forth a formal intimation that “Mr. and Mrs. Bathurst requested the pleasure of Mr. and Mrs. Hyacinth Leycester’s company at dinner, on Saturday next, the 17th instant;” and, accordingly, at half-past seven o’clock on that day, the said gentleman having entered into his own recognisances to keep the peace, escorted his wife to Montagu Square.

Laura was thankful that his punctuality deprived Mr. Bathurst of one reason for objecting to a guest whom she was herself half pleased half frightened to receive. Having settled Mrs. Leycester upon the sofa with Mrs. Maynard, a pretty, quiet, nervous woman, who looked as if her natural cheerfulness had been crushed out of her by an overbearing husband, Laura devoted

herself to the entertainment of the Sultan, between whom and the rest of the party she feared little congeniality could exist. Perceiving that contrary to custom, his buttonhole was ungarnerished, she proposed to repair the omission from the flower-stand, and selecting a fragrant sprig of heliotrope, she was about to offer it to him, when a sudden impulse induced her merely to lay it on the table before him. He took it up with a subdued smile, which betrayed his perfect comprehension of her motive; and maliciously enough feigned inability to fasten it in its place without her assistance.

The thrill which shot through her frame on just touching the lappel of his coat, the blush with which she met the radiant eyes bent on her, and, above all, the instinctive glance she threw across the room to see if "William" were looking, might have warned her of shoals ahead, if she had studied the chart. But people who discredit the existence of love altogether, are not likely to be keenly alive to the risk of loving the wrong man.

The repast was unimpeachable in its way—elegant, abundant, with no attempt at parade, no vulgar imitation of the grander scale. Ley-

ester was just the man to appreciate the good taste that presided over it, and being really as good natured as Laura fancied him supercilious, he exerted himself to make the entertainment pass off pleasantly. Mrs. Maynard, who fell to his especial care, was enchanted with him, and in her somewhat antiquated phraseology, pronounced him "as pretty a gentleman," as she had ever met.

"How could you call him flippant, my dear?" she said to her daughter, who had thought it prudent to warn her of his singularities; "he seems a very genteel young man, and made some very sensible remarks about the whooping cough, which I was telling him was so prevalent in our neighbourhood."

What new light Hyacinth had thrown upon that important topic, Laura could not muster gravity enough to enquire.

The trying time to him was when the ladies quitted the dining room, leaving him face to face with his host, between whom and himself a special antipathy seemed to have grown up; Admiral Maynard, a loud-voiced, dogmatic old gentleman, who used the strongest language on the most trivial occasions, and flung out his opinion

even of the sherry, with an air of defiance that almost made it a personal insult; and his son, who, though admitted by Leycester to be a very good sort of fellow, was not in his set, and had scarcely an idea in common with him. He escaped as soon as propriety permitted, into the more congenial atmosphere of the drawing room, where he was found by the rest, peacefully enthroned among the ladies, who had been reinforced by the addition of the two Misses Maynard.

Now it may be remarked that no man ever likes to witness the triumph of another, even though he may long have ceased to contend himself for empire. The Admiral immediately cleared for action, and kept up a dropping fire of sarcasm against moll-coddles, coxcombs, *et hoc genus omne*; the very sight of a fop made him sick: what was the use of a dainty fellow, curled and scented like a French hair dresser? a man should be hardy and plain, have a rough chin and a stout fist, live on beefsteaks, and sleep on a board; that was his idea. Did not Miss Wentworth agree with him?

“I don’t quite know; Hercules was none the less

able to wield his club when called upon, because he amused his leisure at Omphale's spinning wheel," answered Mary, with an arch glance at Hyacinth, who, ensconced in an easy chair, was endeavouring to penetrate the mysteries of crotchet under Mrs. Bathurst's direction.

"It is easy to run down good looks," said Mrs. Leycester, perceiving that Mary had got rather beyond the Admiral's depth; "but the wisest of mankind have been subject to their influence. We need not go farther than the most illustrious member of your profession, sir, for an example of their power."

"In your sex, madam," replied the old sailor, bowing; "no one denies the power of female charms in dazzling our weak eyes."

"Do you then impute to us so much more strength of sight, as to imagine us insensible to the radiance which blinds you?" demanded the lady. "In other words, if loveliness in a woman proves, as we know it does, a stronger attraction than wit, wisdom, worth, and I may even add to complete the alliteration, wealth, why should beauty be less valuable to a man, as a means of winning the favour, not, of course, of his own sex but of ours?"

Mr. Bathurst, seeing the Admiral at a loss, here took up the argument.

"The comparison does not hold good," he said in his sententious way, "because the male and female mind are not similarly constituted. Without entering deeply into the subject, it is sufficient for our purpose to observe that the amatory instinct is not roused in both cases by the agency of the same senses; love entering man's heart through the eye, and woman's through the ear."

"I doubt that," said Hyacinth's gentle voice, as yet unheard in the controversy.

"You are not aware, perhaps," returned Bathurst, with a slight sneer, "that the words I have quoted are those of an eminent French writer, whose knowledge of human nature has never before been disputed."

"He was an ugly dog himself, you may depend upon it. I have never found it so," rejoined the imperturbable Cinthy, looking up, with delicious *naïveté*, from his work.

"There is really something sublime in that fellow's impudence," whispered Arthur to Miss Wentworth, who could scarcely repress her mirth at the elder gentleman's discomfiture.

The dimples about the conqueror's mouth indicated so much disposition for mischief, that Mrs. Bathurst by way of diversion proposed a little music, and called upon Mary for a song; whereupon Arthur made himself very busy opening the piano, lighting the candles, &c., besides taking upon him to turn over the leaves, a task which he performed as well as his total ignorance of musical notation and the German language would permit. The Misses Maynard then favoured the company with a duet, executing the majestic overture to Semiramide with great skill and correctness, but no more manifestation of interest in the task than if they had both been deaf. As a natural consequence Hyacinth yawned, a disparaging comment which Laura attributed to the hackneyed character of the piece. When it came to her turn to play, she was careful to ask him what style he preferred, hinting that her *répertoire* afforded specimens of a more modern school.

Leycester named the "Battle of Prague."

"What that old-fashioned thing!" cried the horrified Laura, "why it was out of date even before my young days."

"I fancied it was quite a show piece," said

Hyacinth, "my sisters were very fond of practising it, and I used to think the cries of the wounded were very jolly."

The unsophisticated Maynards opened their eyes wide at the singular inappropriateness of the epithet, but their sister, better versed in modern parlance, expressed no astonishment, as she replied: "Oh! if you like descriptive music, I have something here that will suit;" and producing a piece in a gay-coloured wrapper, which seems the symbol of a certain artistic calibre, she sat down to the instrument and performed a mysterious composition, conveying to the mind of the listener no definite idea but that of length. The company generally not understanding it in the least, were of course loud in their applause.

"It has the same effect upon me as reading poetry," observed Mrs. Maynard, sentimentally, but evincing a strong propensity to gape.

"Shelley's poetry especially, where you wander through a haze of words, without catching more than a stray glimpse of sense," muttered her son. "I say, Laura," he continued aloud, "what do you call that affair? My mother's old music-books are full of Sonatas and Rondos;

you girls used to sport, Airs with variations and Fantasias; the newest importations at Malta consisted of nothing but waltzes and polkas; and when I came home I found all the pianos strewed with Reveries and Nocturnes. What is the go at present?"

"This is an 'inspiration,'" replied Laura. "in which a particular scene is suggested to the mind through the medium of musical sounds."

"Indeed? And of what scene were we supposed to be spectators just now?" inquired Maynard, greatly amused.

"Can you not guess?" returned his sister; "I am sure you perceive, Mr. Leycester, what is represented?"

"Chaos, perhaps!" hinted that gentleman.

Laura looked at him reproachfully. "It is a musical picture of the desert. First, profound silence. . . . "

"Expressed by that prolonged rumbling in the bass!" interrupted Arthur.

"Then you hear the approach of a troop of Arabs, the trampling of horses, the wild cries of the riders, who halt for the night beside a well. Next comes . . . "

"The hissing of the coffee-pots as they boil over," interrupted Maynard, with a truly fraternal desire to tease,

"Nonsense, Arthur! You may explain the rest yourself, as you won't let me," exclaimed his sister impatiently, and the more so because she distrusted Hyacinth's impassive countenance.

"Nay, pray don't abandon us amidst this wilderness of notes," persisted the lieutenant, "the imitation is wonderfully close, as far as you have gone, is it not, Leycester?"

"As I never was there, I really cannot say," drawled the exquisite, with a slight elevation of his eyebrows at the familiarity of the address.

Meanwhile Mrs. Maynard had been importuning her son-in-law to "give them a little tune on his flute," which he at length consented to do, to his wife's accompaniment, "if it were not taking her away from a pleasanter occupation."

After a good deal of preliminary business, and several false starts, the pair got off together, and a very funny business they made of it. Mrs. Bathurst's style of playing was diametrically opposite to her sisters. Wanting perseverance

to acquire their manual dexterity, she founded her claim to applause on vigour of touch and variety of expression. She delighted in showy pieces with no very definite purpose; used the pedals a great deal, went through much action with the shoulders and wrists, and glided over the difficult passages she had not patience to master. On the present occasion her task was of a much simpler kind, but she introduced so many flourishes, and wandered so frequently from the strict time, that poor Mr. Bathurst's breath was quite thrown away; a feeble pooh . . . pooh . . being all that was heard of him at rare intervals. However, the parties themselves appeared abundantly satisfied; and as to Mrs. Leycester's inexpressible relief, her husband never once glanced across at her, the public tranquillity was in no way disturbed, even the Admiral waking up in time to join the general "thank you."

"I hope you will give us a song!" said Laura, interrupting Hyacinth's study of the pattern of the carpet, as he sat in a favourite manly attitude, with his arms resting on his knees.

"I never sing at other people's houses, unless I am paid for it," was the decided reply.

"Indeed! And what sum do you require for your services?" asked the lady, somewhat piqued at the refusal.

"A price you would not consent to pay," said he, looking saucily up in her face.

"Oh, Mr. Leycester, I heard of your singing for Mrs. Fitzmaurice a night or two ago, and I am sure she did not . . . engage you on such terms!"

"How do you know what she did!" retorted Cinthy, with a still saucier laugh. "But you shall not tempt me to be indiscreet. Mrs. Leycester, your carriage has been some time announced," he added, rising, upon which, the whole party rose too, and began shaking hands, with the single exception of Hyacinth, who kept his in his pockets, as if firmly resolved to prevent that liberty being taken with him.

"I once, in my green youth, grasped a bashful damsel's shrinking palm, and felt an apple in it," he afterwards observed to his wife, in explanation of his avoidance of that ceremony.

Arrived at home he desired the porter not to

lock the door, as he was going out again immediately.

"My dear Cinthy, do you know how late it is?" remonstrated Anna.

"Late!" repeated he, "Why 'tis now the witching hour of night, when slow folks yawn, and cits go up to bed. I must have a cigar to restore the tone of my mind; and as no married man with a proper sense of decorum, dreams of smoking indoors, I shall just stroll down Piccadilly to the Club, and hear what has been going on at the Opera to-night."

Mrs. Leycester was aware that the locality towards which he was about to bend his steps was noted for high play; but as he had hitherto shown no inclination to rain her at the gaming-table, she retired to rest without any uneasiness on that account. It did happen, however, that on this particular night, Hyacinth sat down to *écarté* with Capt. Lawrence, and continued the game longer than his wont, till after several fluctuations of fortune, he rose a winner to a considerable amount. This circumstance rendered it difficult for him to decline his antagonist's further challenge; it might have seemed ungenerous to refuse him the opportunity

of retrieving his losses, and (for once in his life) Leycester did, from fear of misconstruction, what was neither in accordance with his wishes, nor his judgment.

In half an hour more, Lawrance should have been convinced that the run of luck was against him, and accepted a second proposal to terminate the contest, but by this time the gambling mania was so strong in him, that he was utterly reckless of the consequences, and insisted on tempting fate once more. Hyacinth argued in vain; when did prudential considerations ever check a gamester in his mad career ?

“ Let Benedict go home with his gains,” said Dacre, who had been watching the play with envious eyes; “ a change of partners may bring you better luck, and I am not afraid of a curtain lecture.

“ The edge of your wit is really so keen as to cut itself,” retorted Leycester, suppressing all evidence of irritation save that borne by a flushed cheek. “ Having been mean enough to marry for money, I have no need to gamble for it. Besides, feel my pulse, and look at Lawrance, and judge which is most likely to win.”

The Captain caught his last words, though

uttered in a lower tone, and thought it necessary to resent the implication. "If you mean to say, sir," he began, "that I am not sober, I beg to tell you that you"

"Mistake, no doubt," interrupted Hyacinth, laying his cool fingers on the speaker's burning lips. "Don't be angry, my dear fellow; you know I never quarrel; it deranges my nerves; but I don't object to deprive myself of my natural rest for another hour in your service; and if you are determined to learn to-night by experience the sensations of a beggar, you may as well take the lesson from me as from any one else—perhaps better," he added mentally.

Less than the stipulated period was sufficient to put the climax to Lawrance's ill-fortune: his last stake was of startling magnitude, and having lost it like the rest, he rose, not as before with a volley of oaths, but with a calm though haggard countenance, muttered some incoherent sentence about settling to-morrow, and quitted the apartment.

A good deal of noisy discussion followed, as to his means of paying the large sum in which he stood indebted; the sale of his commission was mentioned as inevitable, and those who had

bets or any similar transactions with him began to speculate upon their probable share of the spoil.

"A nice fellow you are, really, Leycester," was Dacre's parting salutation to Hyacinth, who was leaning abstractedly against the mantelpiece. "You clean a man out at two o'clock on Sunday morning, and at eleven you will go and hear about that 'wicked man,' who has been turning away from his wickedness ever since I was six years old, but does not seem to have succeeded yet."

"Perhaps he is waiting for you to show him the example," Etheredge called after him. "But I say, Cinthy, you talked just now about never quarrelling, and you certainly are the neatest hand in the world at steering clear of a row. Still, I want to know what you would have done if Lawrence had let out that ugly word you so cleverly intercepted? You must have taken some notice of it."

"It would, indeed, have been an awkward predicament. The custom of war in like cases, would, I suppose, have required me to knock him down; a grave physical exertion in the first place, and a style of argument, which, consider-

ing that so unprovoked an insult tended to prove the truth of my suspicions, would have been about as rational as if addressed to the insane. My own inclination, perhaps, would have led me to depute yourself or a committee of the gentlemen present to wait on our irascible friend to-morrow, and obtain from him, at a calmer moment, an apology for the ill-considered violence of to-night. Would not this plan have answered as well as the other?"

"Ah! that's all mighty fine for you, Cinthy," objected the young nobleman, "because you are a sort of a character, you know, and are privileged to do pretty much as you please; but I fear your system, sensible as it sounds, would hardly suffice to protect any one from insolence but yourself."

"Does any one give it a fair trial?" returned Leycester, selecting from his store a dainty little lamp to light him homewards. "Depend upon it, my dear lord, a man who can command his own temper has little to dread from the excesses of others."

"A vastly pretty sentiment for the pulpit!" sneered Major O'Hara, "but in my young days, those peace-at-all-price doctrines would have

rendered their expounder liable to have his nose pulled by the first choice spirit whose humour he chanced to ruffle."

Hyacinth paused on his way to the door to say, with all his wonted suavity: "You will remember, Major, that my remarks were intended to apply exclusively to a community of *gentlemen*."

"Bravo, Cinthy!" "By Jove, Major, you've caught it!" "The Leycester rose is by no means without a thorn," were a few of the exclamations which greeted the favorite's exit from the scene.

When he reached the bottom of the steps, he stood a moment irresolute; then instead of retracing the road to Park Lane, he pointed his cigarette in the opposite direction, and walked leisurely to the St. James's District, where Lawrence had his "den."

"Is your master come in?" he asked of the servant who answered his summons.

"Yes, sir, about twenty minutes ago, and went upstairs directly."

"Ah! well, I must say two words to him before I go home; but you need not announce me, I know the way to his room;" and with a gentle

exhibition of will he passed the valet, and mounted to Lawrance's apartment.

Surprise, not unmixed with a sterner feeling, was manifest in the Captain's face; he started, frowning, to his feet, and could scarcely pitch his voice to the proper key in which to enquire the motive for this intrusion.

"It occurred to me that I had no acknowledgment of the state of affairs between us," replied Leycester; "and as I was pretty sure you would not be asleep, I thought I might as well look in and remind you of the omission."

A still darker shade gathered upon Lawrance's brow. "I hardly expected in you so keen a creditor," he said. "Surely you could have trusted me for a night."

"Hm—I am not so sure," murmured Hyacinth, with a peculiar expression, and a scrutinising glance round the room, which still further increased his companion's perplexity. While the guardsman was seeking for words in which to vent his disgust and impatience, Leycester quietly sat down at the table, took out his pencil, drew up an I O U in the usual form, and pushed it across to Lawrance for his signature, which the latter, still mute with anger,

affixed in a desperate manner, without even deigning to read the contents. Just as he dashed off the final letter of his name, the figures caught his eye.

"Why, what nonsense is this, you have made me sign?" he broke out. "You have put me down your debtor for only £50!" and he made a motion to tear up the paper.

"I'll thank you not to destroy that document," cried Hyacinth, impounding the same. "It is perfectly correct. The sum stated is the utmost amount I will consent to receive at your hands. I lay it down as a rule never to win or lose more at a single sitting; and only transgressed that limit to-night, because I saw you were madly bent on playing, and that Dacre was disposed to profit by your hallucination. You might have found him harder to deal with."

Poor Lawrance's eloquence was doomed to suppression! He could hardly speak now for astonishment. "Am I to understand," he faltered, "that you mean to remit . . . But no! such a termination of my embarrassments is too romantic to be real. Even if you were generous enough to relinquish your claims, what would the world say to my acceptance of such a compromise?"

"The world need form no opinion on the subject, unless you take the trouble to supply it with materials. *I* shall certainly not publish the result of this interview."

"By heaven, Leycester, you're a noble creature!" was the only response that suggested itself to the enfranchised debtor.

"You think so?" returned Hyacinth, with a tinge of bitterness in his tone. "And yet, a bare hour past, you would have fastened upon me the reproach which no man is allowed, by men, to forgive."

"You have vanquished me at all points, Cinthy," said the young officer, with deep emotion, "in self-control, forbearance, magnanimity, as well as in the paltry game which has furnished you with the opportunity of displaying all these fair qualities, while it worked so much evil in me. Little did I expect to be so put to the blush by you, of all mankind; you whose vocation has not been considered that of a moral teacher, and whom good people regard as"

"A frivolous coxcomb, with a heart as empty as his head—is not that the phrase?" interrupted Leycester. "Well, if this night's experience have taught you nothing else, you will be the better for learning to bear less hardly upon us

butterflies, at whom it pleases the bees of society —aye, and the drones also—to buzz, scorn, and rebuke; as if making honey, or eating it, were the sole legitimate purpose of all insect existence. The bee, who has been brought up to the business, cannot be regarded as a respectable member of the hive, if he refuses his share of work; but why should he raise an outcry against his neighbour, who was not fitted by nature for any more useful employment than the display of his painted wings? But it is time I should spread mine, or I shall reach home just as the maids are coming down stairs; I should be sorry to destroy my prestige by appearing before them in so lamentably seedy a condition."

"One moment more," said Lawrance, detaining between his the hand extended to him. "You have taken my stupified silence for consent, and tried to disguise under a careless air the extent of the obligation; yet I cannot but hesitate to take advantage of a liberality so rare that the world would call it madness. You yourself may see the matter hereafter in a different light, and repent the impulse which—"

"Pshaw! my dear fellow, where is the mighty sacrifice?" interrupted Hyacinth. "Shall I be

the poorer for your retention of money I never possessed? or do you suppose it would have given me a better appetite for breakfast to-morrow, to hear that you had blown your brains out overnight?"

The Captain started rather consciously. "What induced you to suspect," he stammered.

"Add *sagacity* to your next list of my good gifts," cried Leycester, with a silvery laugh that broke pleasantly upon the sombre tone of the discourse. "I see I was quite right not to postpone my visit."

We regret to state, that having sought his couch so late this Sunday morning, he was not up in time for Church, an omission which sadly distressed his amiable wife. Had he gone to sleep in the pew by her side, she would have been quite contented. So inaccurately do we estimate the good and evil that is around us! When the owner of this wide field refused His servants leave to root out the tares among the wheat, he surely foresaw what havoc dim-sighted zeal would make, in attempting to draw a line between the two.

CHAPTER XIV.

"A large portion of the roses, as the girl afterwards discovered, had blight or mildew at their hearts; but, viewed at a fair distance, the whole rose-bush looked as if it had been brought from Eden that very summer, together with the mould in which it grew."—*THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES.*

THE night of the ball, so eagerly anticipated by some of the invited, came at last; and Mrs. Leycester's spacious saloons were filled, but not crowded, that worst of vulgar errors—with a gay and glittering throng. The decorative and gastronomic arrangements were each complete in their way, without exhibiting any remarkable novelty. Hyacinth deprecated any attempt to vie with the magnificence of a regal fête, or the effect of a theatrical spectacle.

"People generally don't care a straw for the upholsterer's part of the business," he affirmed. "Get together a sufficient number of the right sort, give them room to move, good music, plenty of lights and refreshments, and what do they want besides? Does a yard more or less of

pink calico drapery make any impression upon a man who is secure of his own get-up? and when a girl is provided with a partner to her liking, do you suppose she notices whether the floor is chalked or not?"

The superior importance attached by the speaker to personal, over local adornments, warrants a few details on the subject of costume. Anna herself, in a satin dress of the beautiful tint, something more than rose and less than cherry, her husband's partiality to which had gained it the popular name of "Hyacinth colour," nearly covered with black lace, a diamond arrow transfixing her rich coil of hair, while a tuft of hollyhocks filled up each side of the head, looked a wife of whom any man (above thirty) might be proud. Like the flower, however, she had selected for her wreath, she was a little too far advanced towards the autumn of life, to show well beside a consort scarcely yet in his prime, who wandered about like a summer breeze, exhaling the delicate fragrance of the tea-rose,—fit emblem of his soft and voluptuous adolescence.

On his arm hung the *débutante* of the evening, the lovely Veronica, as like himself as sister can

be to brother; there was the same slender, elastic figure, the same ripe bloom on the cheek; luxuriant tresses of the same shade were swept in loose *bandeaux* from the face, and, twined in countless braids at the back, formed a sufficient ornament for so young a head. Her eyes were hazel, instead of blue, but as in his case, the brow and lashes were many shades darker than the mass of hair,—a trait imparting singular piquancy to the countenance. She was attired, by Hyacinth's special instructions, in white glacé silk (which would serve, her mother calculated, for a slip afterwards,) with no other trimming than some fringe drooping from the shoulders, and a bouquet, made expressly for her, of the little azure blossoms, of which she bore the classical denomination. Bracelets studded with turquoises, her sister-in-law's gift, completed a simple toilette, to which (as should ever be the case) the wearer lent its chief grace. Leycester opened the ball with her in person, and was quickly besieged by applications for her hand.

“ My sweet little sister,” he said, in the interval succeeding the first quadrille, “ you are very pretty, and you dance charmingly; and what is still more attractive to these jaded votaries of

pleasure, yours is a new face; it follows, therefore, that you will be a good deal run after. Now, let me give you two pieces of advice. In the first place, don't engage yourself for more dances than you can recollect, and so disappoint half your partners. Eglantine does so, I know, and fancies it adds to her importance to be contended for by a dozen rivals; but men don't like it. Secondly, don't be seen too often in the refreshment rooms, nor eat too much when there: such school-girl gourmandise shocks a man of refinement, and makes the ill-natured sneer. I do not presume to interfere with your choice of cavaliers; you have no doubt received full maternal instructions on that head. If you regard this ball-room merely as a fishing pond, you will of course avoid all the stylish well-looking fellows, who are pretty sure to be younger sons, cavalry officers, and similarly unprofitable members of society. You may set it down indeed, as a general rule, that no man with handsome whiskers is ever worth more than two hundred a year.

"Just like your impertinence, Cinthy," cried a jovial voice at his elbow. "Don't you believe a word he says, Miss Leycester. I should be

glad to know whether he has left off curling his own since he came into his fortune. Are you engaged for the next polka?"

"Don't upset her, if you can help it," said Hyacinth maliciously, as he resigned his fair companion to Lord Etheredge's care,—rather to the disgust of her elder sister, who had been quite prepared to forget, for his sake, her engagement to Arthur Maynard.

To do justice to this young lady's costume, would require the pen of a court milliner. Her manifold pink skirts were bordered with endless rows of ribbon, and looped up with innumerable bunches of flowers; while an entire rose-bush bloomed among her hair, already twisted with beads, and frizzed out into stiff curls. In spite, however, of these artificial drawbacks, her natural beauty was so conspicuous that Miss Wentworth ceased to wonder at Maynard's infatuation, which after this night's evidence was no longer doubtful.

Poor Mary, in the solitude of her own room, had viewed her really elegant *parure* with some complacency, hoping at least to find favour in one pair of eyes; but when, in the full blaze of light, she contrasted her own image with Eglan-

tine's dazzling complexion and regular features, lit up by all the animation of conscious triumph, she felt hopelessly eclipsed. It needed little observation to convince her that the influence she had once possessed over Arthur's ductile mind, had passed into other hands. He was still attentive and polite—too scrupulously so, in fact, for these trifling acts of outward homage lose their significance when they cease to spring spontaneously from the teeming soil within. He danced with her twice, which was as much as could be expected of him; but he did not linger near her unnecessarily in the intervals, and even while speaking to her, his glance often wandered in search of Eglantine. Mary would almost rather have had reason to complain of his neglect, than be thus offered the dry husk of courtesy whence the kernel had been abstracted.

Nothing is so detrimental to the general enjoyment of a scene like that we are describing, as to have a special interest in it. But for the irresistible concentration of her thoughts on one particular object, Mary might have derived quite as much amusement from what was passing around her as her friends, the Maynards.

About midnight when most of the assembly

began to look heated and limp (especially as to their shirt-collars), Mrs. Fitzmaurice made her *entrée*, surrounded by a select train of adorers, among whom appeared Mr. Dacre and the young Marquis of Wells. She wore a dress of sulphur-coloured crape, adorned with purple velvet heart's-ease, a circlet of pearls crowning her majestic head; and far outshone every woman in the room, even those who had greatly the advantage of her in point of youth. Anna was seized with a real pang of alarm at the apparent intimacy between her husband and this resplendent creature, whom she had so often heard described as a dangerous person; and watched their colloquy with no small uneasiness.

"What a lovely rose you have in your button-hole," remarked Queen Constance.

"Yes, isn't it?" said the exquisite, inhaling its perfume with a calmly ecstatic air.

"How obtuse people become after marriage! If I had said as much to Lord Wells, he would have laid the precious blossom at my feet."

"Because your *puits d'amour* would simply have paid half-a-guinea for his treasure at Covent Garden Market; now mine was placed

in its enviable position by—my wife," said Hyacinth, with a slight hesitation.

"And you expect me to believe you value it on that account," cried Mrs. Fitzmaurice, with a scornful laugh.

"I expect you to understand that it would be no reason for my refraining to pull it in pieces, if I felt so inclined, but that it is a very sufficient reason for my not giving it to you."

The lady bent on him a searching glance, as she replied, after a moment's silence: "Your character is a perfect enigma to me, Cinthy Leycester. Are you worse or better than you pretend to be? A libertine with a dash of sentiment flavouring his misdeeds, an egotist with a heart, a man about town with some notion of integrity; such a mixture of anomalies has not been witnessed since the days of the Knights Templar."

"Never mind my character," replied Cinthy, laughing; "it is good enough for the company I keep. Will you waltz?"

"With you, no; I am engaged to the Marquis."

Hyacinth had not moved far from the sofa on

which he had been sitting, when he encountered Mrs. Leycester, who stopped him to say: "Do you know, Cinthy, I think Mrs. Bathurst would like to dance."

"Dance! why, my dear Anna, she is married, and something more, if my eyes do not deceive me."

"Suppose she is married," answered Anna, noticing only by a deprecating look the latter half of his objection; "matrons much older than herself partake of that amusement. Your mother is performing this quadrille with Lord Wilfred Grafton, with Lady Macarthy for a *vis-à-vis*, and Mrs.—"

"You see, my dear, I only recollect that you don't dance; and as you are my model of wedded propriety, I concluded it was not the thing; but I have no objection to Mrs. Bathurst's standing up, if it will give her pleasure so to do."

"Your generous concurrence is a point gained, no doubt; but what I chiefly want of your Serene Highness is to provide her with a partner. She does not know the gentlemen here, and might not care to dance with one of my select-

ing; but if you took up some one, she would consider it a compliment."

"Well, I don't mind taking charge of Mrs. Bathurst," said Hyacinth, on consideration; "but I can't go about impressing partners for those sisters of hers, in short-waisted muslins and blue sashes."

"They are certainly not models of fashion," replied Mrs. Leycester, smiling; "and yet those poor girls are probably as modest, sensible, and well-informed as any in the room."

"Very likely, my love, but domestic virtues are only fitted to adorn the domestic hearth. A sound hunter is a remarkably valuable animal, but he would cut a queer figure at Epsom or Newmarket."

"There is Captain Lawrance now, he is a good-natured person," cried Anna, arresting her husband's steps, as he prepared to move away; "could you not introduce him to one of the Misses Maynard?"

"Impossible," was the emphatic response; "Lawrance is the last man from whom I would ask a favour."

"Why, I thought you were great friends; have you had any quarrel?"

"Au contraire, m'amie, I was fortunate enough lately to render him some slight service, so that he might not think himself at liberty to refuse any request of mine. Do you understand?"

Mrs. Leycester's admiring gaze followed his retreating figure, as he made his way through the crowd to undertake the task she had set him of entertaining Mrs. Bathurst. Poor Laura had quite lost the simplicity which enabled her sisters to derive unmixed satisfaction from the gay scene, and the grand folks with whom they found themselves associated. Her intimacy with Leycester had given her several new ideas; among others, a desire to move in the fashionable circles which he frequented; yet when there, she felt ill at ease and oppressed by an uncomfortable sense of inferiority. The dress upon which she had bestowed so much attention appeared to her wofully deficient in style, compared with the brilliant costumes around her; her prettiness seemed eclipsed by the blaze of high-born beauty; and she, who had been the star of the county ball-rooms, found herself sitting half the evening unnoticed by the side of her mother, with whom she had come, Mr. Bathurst not caring to accompany her. Hya-

cinth's duties, or, as she interpreted it, his flirtations with other women, had left him hitherto no leisure to bestow upon her, and there was scarcely any one else present with whom she could claim acquaintance. The dissatisfaction visible in her countenance had at length attracted Anna's notice, and caused the appeal to her husband, which has been recorded above.

"I see you don't dance, Mrs. Bathurst, and really you are quite right," said he, sauntering up to the spot, and sinking into the corner of the sofa which Mrs. Maynard had just vacated. "Exemption from serving on fatigue parties of this description is one of the few advantages we married people possess over single ones."

"I have not entirely renounced the practice," answered Laura, undecided whether to smile upon his present advances, or pout at his previous neglect; "but as a married woman, I do not of course think of standing up with any one who chooses to ask me."

"That is exactly my case; I dance, as I swear, only under great provocation. As, however, you acknowledge yourself to be open to entreaty, perhaps I may be fortunate enough—

ah! Sinclair, how are you, old fellow?—fortunate enough to find some one who may tempt you from this retreat. There is the gentleman who has just passed us, for instance, one of the richest commoners in England, with three country places, and an unencumbered income of—but I forgot, such qualifications have no longer any value in your eyes. What do you say then to Mr. Hay, that young man yonder, whose head seems crowned with an armful of synonymous material; he is reputed the best polka dancer in London, and slow as he looks, will whirl you into the middle of next week, if desired. Shall I introduce him to you?"

"Certainly not, I have no desire to anticipate time in the manner you describe; and besides, fond as I used to be of the polka, I could not join in it now without indecorum."

"Why not?" enquired Hyacinth, innocently.

Laura's look of self-approval was exchanged for one of surprise, gradually passing into embarrassment; the simplest questions are often the most difficult to answer, and it was not easy to phrase her reply to this, with a pair of bright male eyes unmercifully fixed upon her. She perceived the trap into which she had fallen,

but it was too late to escape the discussion she had herself invited; and with a degree of hesitation that gave unnecessary seriousness to her tone, she alleged the impropriety of admitting such familiarity from any one but her husband.

"A thoroughly English prejudice!" cried Leycester. "We submit our daughters to inspection as freely as a Virginian slave-merchant, and watch our wives with the jealousy of a Turk. Now abroad they reverse our system; looking sharply after the maidens, and leaving the matrons to take care of themselves."

"So I have heard, but it does not seem to me a desirable arrangement. Women there only begin to enjoy themselves when they ought to be settling down to the sober duties of life. I never went to large parties after I was engaged," said Laura, resuming somewhat of the self-satisfied air; "and you surely would not think it becoming in a married woman to share in the amusements of a ball-room as freely as she did when a girl?"

"That depends upon her motives," answered Hyacinth. "If she only went into society to pick up a husband, of course she is quite right to discontinue her exertions as soon as that

object is attained, but if she danced because she took pleasure in the movement for its own sake, I don't see why she should doom herself to inaction for the whole of her wedded life."

"There is no objection to her joining in an occasional quadrille."

"Quadrilles, my dear Madam, are an obsolete institution," was Hyacinth's emphatic declaration. "So sprightly a lady as yourself could not possibly derive any pleasure from the performance of that solemn farce. But all this while I have forgotten to secure you a partner, so I suppose I must dance with you myself. Ah! there is my favourite Valse d'Amour," he continued, springing to his feet. "Come, Mrs. Bathurst, I am sure you waltz."

"I did, certainly, but from my point of view, you know, waltzing is just as bad as the polka."

"Oh! but I'm a married man," said the tempter, in the confident tone of one who has finally closed an argument.

Laura did not stop to examine the validity of the plea; the music sounded invitingly in her ears, before her stood the most fascinating of men, and when he extended his arm and said,

"Come,"—moved by an irresistible attraction she arose and went.

Without pronouncing upon the abstract propriety or impropriety of the act in question, it may, at least, be safely asserted that, in departing from her own avowed standard of right, Laura committed a great imprudence. What might have been harmless enough to others, became dangerous to her; it was wrong, if she felt it so; and had her conscience been entirely at ease, why should it have been a relief to her to recollect that Mr. Bathurst was not present? To import principle into such a case, and then sacrifice it to inclination, was to inspire little respect for the stability of her character, and give a great triumph to the vanity of her companion. Had any one else been proposed to her as a partner, she would have declined the offer, and plumed herself upon her virtue.

As far as the pleasure of the moment was concerned, however, she could not have chosen more wisely. Hyacinth, who in spite of his lounging habits, was singularly graceful in all his movements, could dance as well as most men when he thought fit, and having found a col-

league worthy of him, he carried her lightly and swiftly round in a style that excited the admiration of the spectators. The opening of the supper-room had drawn off a portion of the company, leaving something like a clear space for the evolutions of the remainder. Mrs. Bathurst, scarcely noticed before, acquired a kind of prestige by being seen on her cavalier's very exclusive arm; requests for an introduction were plentifully made, and if she sat down again that evening, it was certainly her own fault.

She even attracted (as Leycester intended she should) the notice of Mrs. Fitzmaurice, who watched the couple with a feeling akin to envy. Her new favourite, Lord Wells, looked better at rest than in motion; his style of waltzing closely resembling that of the little figures made to spin round together on a wet plate. Rigidly erect, and wearing an aspect of solemn determination, he went through his steps with scrupulous precision, careless of accommodating them to the music, so that if by any chance he lost the measure, no effort on his part was made, no effort on his partner's availed, to regain it. There was no remedy but to pull up and start afresh, a course which the stately Con-

stantia adopted, thus gaining leisure to observe Mrs. Bathurst's superior good fortune, and contrast the obviously agreeable remarks with which Hyacinth—who was none of your saltatory hurricanes—had breath enough to entertain his danseuse with the silence of her vacant Apollo.

Meeting Leycester on the stairs, as she was about taking her departure, she stopped to ask who was the lady he had honoured with his hand.

“A little *roturière* with whom I sometimes amuse myself,” was the reply, “and who is falling in love with me as fast as her sense of propriety will allow.”

“She is very short,” remarked Mrs. Fitzmaurice, drawing herself up.

“That is rather an advantage to a fellow of my height,” answered Hyacinth, exaggerating the effort required to cast Constantia’s bournous over her shoulders.

“And not at all *distinguée*,” pursued the lady; “you used to be more ambitious in your flirtations.”

“Anything for a change,” said the gentleman, carelessly. “*Toujours princesse*, you know; besides, this pretty rustic threw her glove

at me, a challenge no man of gallantry could refuse."

"Do you not mean to see me to my carriage?" asked Mrs. Fitzmaurice, as he turned away.

"Have not you got Lord Wells?"

"What nonsense, Cinthy! You are not jealous of him?" murmured she, laying her soft hand on his arm, and bending her liquid eyes full upon his. Leycester sighed, shook his perfumed locks with a melancholy air, and walked very slowly into the refreshment-room, where he called for a bottle of champagne, and drank half of it to the health of a pretty maid-servant doing voluntary duty there. Before the day then dawning had reached its meridian, he received a note from Mrs. Fitzmaurice, inviting him to ride with her in the park at five.

On emerging into the vestibule, he found it crowded with people awaiting their summons to depart, among whom were the Maynard party, as well as his mother and sisters, Lord Etheredge very busy shawling Veronica, while Arthur Maynard was in close attendance upon Eglantine. Mrs. Leycester's carriage was called first, and off she went, followed by both gentlemen, Arthur sending back word to say that she had offered to set him down, and that, as the family

vehicle was over-crowded, he had accepted the offer. Miss Wentworth's face fell on hearing the announcement; it was the straw that showed beyond a doubt which way the wind of his preference blew. Hyacinth himself escorted Mrs. Bathurst to the coach-door, pressing her arm, she fancied, rather closer to his side than was necessary, and wishing "Good night" in a tone that invested that extremely common-place salutation with something of a poetic character.

The drive home was rather a silent one, Mrs. Maynard was too sleepy to talk, Mary too depressed, and Laura too much excited; the *aliquid amari* in her *fonte leporum* being a twinge of shame that she had not been handed into her own brougham, instead of making one of five in a hired clarence.

Ann went to bed happy, because Hyacinth left a kiss upon her lips, instead of turning his cheek to her as usual, and because he remarked that Mrs. Fitzmaurice's front teeth were too prominent; an association of ideas which it did not occur to her to analyse.

"Three women, at least, will dream of me to-night," said Hyacinth to himself, as he laid his own head upon his pillow. "I hope two of them don't talk in their sleep!"

CHAPTER XV.

"True, I have married her;
The very head and front of my offending
Hath this extent, no more."

OTHELLO.

"I am your husband, if you like of me."
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

A FEW weeks after the event recorded in the last chapter, Mr. and Mrs. Leycester were startled one morning as they sat at breakfast, by the sudden irruption of their (natural and legal) mother, in a state of frantic excitement, the cause of which was the disappearance of her daughter Veronica. The messenger sent up to chide her tardiness in joining the family repast, had found her room untenanted, and a note on the table, setting forth in the approved style, that the pleadings of love having conquered her filial scruples, she had exchanged the maternal protection for that of Lord Etheredge.

"Lord Etheredge!" cried Hyacinth, when his mother, after much circumlocution, reached

this point of her narrative. "The little puss has not chosen so badly. Had you any suspicion that he was sweet upon her?"

It appeared that his visits at the house, his constant attendance at all places where he was likely to meet the party, had excited their notice, but it was supposed (as usual) that Eglantine was his attraction. Need we add, after this intimation, that Miss Leycester could discover no excuses for her sister's shameful conduct? Her mother also was worked up to a high pitch of indignation, and ended her tale by reproaching Hyacinth for sitting so quietly to listen to it.

"My dear mother, I'll stand, if it be any relief to your feelings," said her son, pushing back his chair, and giving himself a refreshing stretch. "But, joking apart, what would you have me do in the business?"

"Pursue them, of course."

"What's the use?" objected he; "when a girl runs off with a man in this way, the sooner she gets married to him the better. If I brought her back before the knot was tied, you could not get any one else to marry her now, you know."

"But suppose this young man does not marry her, Hyacinth," suggested Anna.

"Etheredge would never be such a villain," exclaimed Leycester, looking serious for the first time.

"Dear Cinthy, you judge of others by yourself; but all men have not your nice sense of honor."

Hyacinth, colouring a little, bowed playfully to his wife, as he said,

"The object, then, of my mission is to bully him into matrimony?"

"Well, my dear, you must be the best judge of that," answered his mother. "All I know is, that when a young lady elopes, her father or brother immediately follows her in a carriage and-four. . . ."

"And shoots her seducer before her face, I suppose," added Cinthy. "Well, mother, I accept the stern responsibility of my position. Ring for Bradshaw, Anna, and I'll start at once. By the bye, where am I to go?" he cried, with a sudden recollection of that difficulty, when the mysterious volume was put into his hand. "To Gretna Green? Let us see: Gretna. . . . page 110, 113."

It appeared, however, from such indications as Mrs. Leycester had been able to gather, that

the fugitives had gone southwards, probably with the design of passing over to the continent; thither it was arranged that Hyacinth should proceed, shaping his course by such traces of them as he should discover on the way.

"As soon as I am fairly off, Anna," was his parting advice, "I recommend you to see about leaving town, or you will be bored to death by a horde of curious impertinents. We should only have remained a week or two longer, under any circumstances. Miss Wentworth has not quitted London yet; get her to keep you company during my absence: there is no telling how long I may be detained."

Both suggestions were good: Mrs. Leycester removed on the next day but one to her villa in Kent, accompanied by Mary.

Letters were shortly received from the traveller, allaying the most pressing anxiety on Veronica's account. He had tracked the young couple to Brussels, where they were comfortably seated at a well-furnished table, when he was ushered into the apartment. His reception was more cordial than is usually vouchsafed to similar intruders; Veronica, half pleased and half frightened, threw her arms round his neck, while Etheredge,

carrying off his embarrassment under an appearance of jollity, invited him to "sit down and have some grub."

"Are you married?" enquired Leycester, gravely, delaying his acceptance both of the offered hand and meal. His sister held up her finger, on which glittered a wedding ring.

"I ask you, Etheredge," persisted Hyacinth, fixing a keen glance upon his gay friend's unshrinking countenance.

"What a fellow you are, Cinthy! Would you like to see the certificate?" said the latter.

"Yes," was the quiet reply. Which document having been produced, and proving satisfactory, the head of the house of Leycester embraced the weeping peeress, and wished her and her husband more happiness than they deserved. "You have taken your fate into your own hands, Lady Etheredge," he continued, "and with it a heavier responsibility than most women assume. Your future conduct must redeem your present imprudence in the eyes of the world, and make your consort forget it. Happy for you if he never upbraid you with the weakness that threw you into his arms!"

"Oh! Cinthy, don't you be against me," sobbed the youthful matron. "George always said you would take my part."

"Don't cry, my angel," interposed the bridegroom, administering the consolation that occurs most spontaneously to a man's mind at such a moment. "Cinthy is no authority in these matters. What does he know about love? Whenever I look back upon this period, it will be with a grateful recollection of the sacrifices you made to prove the strength of your attachment to me. What do you mean, you confounded humbug, by coming the elder brother over us in this style?" he said, addressing Hyacinth as soon as Veronica, alarmed at the approach of a waiter, had retired into an adjoining room to remove the traces of tears from her countenance. "Have you gone over to the camp of the Respectables that you hold forth in this solemn strain against a marriage as good as your own."

"What did you mean," retorted Leycester, relaxing somewhat of his unwonted dignity, "by running away with my poor little sister, without the consent of a single relative, when you might have had her and it too for the asking? Your intentions, it is proved, were honourable;

you surely could not suppose my mother was likely to oppose any insurmountable obstacle to your suit?"

"Perhaps not," replied Etheredge, returning his brother-in-law's smile; "but I was not so sure of mine; and we have the pious Miss Sellon's sanction to the policy of not teasing parents for permission that will probably be withheld. Now, the noble lady who brought me into the world, is the proudest woman on its surface. The title, you know, was in her family, and she had influence enough to get it revived in my father's favor; a circumstance she never allowed the poor gentleman to forget. To atone for her condescension, she had set her heart (to speak metaphorically) upon my making a transcendantly brilliant match. What she would have said to my actual choice, is more than I can conceive."

"I confess myself unable to perceive the immense disparity," cried Hyacinth, with some warmth. "Old blood may very well vie with new rank; and in point of pedigree, a Leycester is no unfit mate even for a scion of the Montmorencys."

"Exactly: that is the sort of thing I ex-

pected," answered Etheredge. "I was sure you would get upon your hind-legs at my mother's objections, and probably refuse to let your sister enter a family where she would not be cordially received; then, if, after an age of worry, consent had been extorted, there would have been another century of delay over settlements, and trousseaux, and licenses, and breakfasts, and the devil knows what besides, so I thought the best plan was to cut the matter short, and steal away with my bride at once. Come, old boy, there's no great harm done; give us your hand, and say no more about it."

"And what is to be your next move?" enquired Hyacinth, when the interrupted collation had been amicably disposed of.

"I propose remaining abroad a year or two," answered Etheredge. "My darling Veronica has all the world to see, and by that time this affair will have blown over, and our respective families grown accustomed to the idea. Then we will come home, and make it all up, and be very jolly together."

These particulars were communicated by Leycester to his wife, with an intimation that he should remain a few days at Brussels and look

about him, if she could spare him so long. "So you see, Mary dear, you must not talk of leaving me just yet," said she to her niece, after imparting the contents of the letter.

Miss Wentworth gave but a divided attention to the narrative: she too had received a letter that morning.

The Maynards had left town almost immediately after the ball, Arthur desperately in love with Eglantine Leycester, as was patent to the ladies of his family, who did not conceal their dissatisfaction. The girls were jealous for Mary, whom they had long loved as a sister. The consummation they so ardently desired, they had half-involuntarily encouraged her to expect: it touched them closely, therefore, that the anticipations they had held out should be realised. Mrs. Maynard, like her daughters, had conceived no very favourable opinion of the family with which it was her son's present fancy to connect himself. Young Mrs. Leycester was admitted to be a charming person, and Hyacinth's eccentricities met with the indulgence seldom refused to a handsome man; but his mother appeared to her a thoroughly worldly, frivolous woman; Lady Wilfred Grafton was disagreeably super-

cilious; Eglantine a determined flirt, little fitted, from her previous habits, tastes, and modes of thought, to become the wife of a subaltern in a marching regiment with very limited means. Even in a pecuniary point of view, the advantages were all on the side of the Wentworth alliance; Mary having ten thousand pounds entirely at her own disposal, while Eglantine's whole fortune, actual and prospective, would not amount to half that sum.

All these considerations, urged on him from so many different quarters, were not without their weight in the young man's ductile mind. Removed from daily contact with his idol, the fever of his devotion abated, and he was enabled to listen to the voice of memory reminding him of Mary's numerous excellencies, and to institute comparisons between the old love and the new, which did not always tend to the benefit of the latter. He felt that his passion for the one was an intoxication of the senses, while his attachment to the other was based on reason and sound judgment; he remembered the elevating influence Mary had always exercised over him, and saw clearly the advantages of securing a companion who would stimulate into activity all

his higher qualities, instead of one whose intellectual level was lower than his own; and yet—so little accessible is the heart through the brain—one smile of Eglantine's would have upset all his sensible conclusions, and brought him once more to her feet. His very belief that Miss Wentworth cared most for him, and would turn the readiest ear to his suit—a belief incautiously fostered by advocates unskilled in the mysteries of male nature—made him less eager to press it.

While he still vacillated, came a letter from Laura (who had received no particular attention from the Leycester ladies) remonstrating most strongly against the projected transfer of his allegiance from Mary to Eglantine, which she represented as a positive breach of faith towards the former, "after all that had passed." A postscript contained the news, which had just reached her, of Veronica Leycester's elopement.

The Maynards were thus furnished with a new argument against the connection. "See what sort of bringing up those girls have had!" was now the cry.

"It is not Miss Leycester's fault, if her sister

has done a foolish thing," pleaded Arthur.
" And besides, mother, you were not always equally strict. When Lady Susanna Brunton gave her father the slip, and got married one morning without his leave, I recollect you upheld her."

" I might have said then, my dear, what I am perfectly willing to repeat now, that a parent is seldom justified in interfering with the choice of a grown up child, except in the way of advice and remonstrance. Lady Susanna was of an age to judge for herself, and there were peculiar features in her case which excused the boldness of the step; but her example cannot be quoted as a precedent for a girl of seventeen, who quits her mother's roof by night with an acquaintance of a few months' standing; and this, too, without any urgent motive that I can discover. Mrs. Leycester is not the woman to reject a lord for her son-in-law, unless I am much mistaken in her."

As Arthur did not pursue the discussion, his sisters believed him convinced of the danger to be apprehended from marrying into so ill-regulated a family. That, however, was not the question with which his thoughts were busy;

Mrs. Bathurst's hint that his character was involved, had placed the point at issue in a new light. Had he really gone too far to retreat?—retreat, that is, with honour, for he was as sensitive on the score of reputation as a soldier should be, and too kind-hearted to contemplate with indifference the prospect of making a woman unhappy. Sooner than be accused of trifling wantonly with her affections, he would have married any damsel of his acquaintance; much less, therefore, would he hesitate to make good any expectations he might have raised in Miss Wentworth. He went over all the circumstances of their intimacy, and if he could not charge himself with wilfully misleading the young lady as to the nature of his sentiments, neither did he blame others for the interpretation they had put upon his conduct. The plain fact was, he acknowledged to himself, not that those same sentiments had been misunderstood then, but that they were altered now; he had not been insincere, but he was inconstant.

Seized with compunction for his own fickleness, and forgetful that in marrying a woman without a decided inclination towards

her, he was doing her a much greater injury than in leaving her to deplore an unreciprocated inclination towards him; he brought matters to a crisis with the headlong hurry that distinguishes weak minds when once roused, and wrote the letter which Mary Wentworth is now replacing in its envelope, after reading it over a third time.

It has been intimated that Mary's life hitherto had not been a particularly enjoyable one, neither had it been marked by any positive sorrow. With whatever domestic *désagreements* she had been called to contend, she had never yet borne that heavy burden of responsibility, which weighs so painfully upon those of maturer years, well-nigh counterbalancing all the (real and imaginary) pleasures of independence. The chariot of her destiny was now for the first time submitted to her own guidance, and she hesitated to grasp the reins. How little had she anticipated that the day which brought her the offer of Arthur Maynard's hand, would be the darkest she had ever known!

It was fortunate that several trifling circumstances concurred to procure her some hours of undisturbed deliberation. "Men and women,"

says the energetic authoress of *Shirley*, “never struggle so hard as when they struggle alone, without witness, counsellor, or confidant; unencouraged, unadvised, and unpitied;” and more especially is this self-reliance necessary in affairs of the heart, where no inculcated wisdom is so trustworthy as natural instinct. Far from devolving upon another the trouble of working out a problem, the solution of which concerned herself only, Mary did not even hurry to seek her aunt’s advice or sympathy. It was late in the day when Mrs. Leycester, having despatched her own correspondence, noticed her niece’s abstraction, and enquired the cause.

“I hope the post brought you no bad news this morning,” said she.

Mary replied by placing Arthur’s epistle in her hand. Hastily glancing at its contents, Anna broke out with, “Well, my dear girl, this is what we wished and hoped; I am sure I congratulate you heartily, or, at least, I congratulate him, for without disparaging the man of your choice, my love, I must say the chief gain is on his side. I rejoice at the accomplishment of your desires, and am prepared to give a cordial welcome to the nephew about to be presented to me.”

"You take it, I perceive, for granted, that I shall accept Mr. Maynard's proposal," said Mary, when she found means to put in a word. Checked thus suddenly in her gratulatory mood, Mrs. Leycester looked up in surprise as she answered: "Have you any hesitation about it, my dear?"

"How can I do other than hesitate about marrying a man whose preference for some one else is notorious?"

"You are thinking of Eglantine Leycester," rejoined Anna: "but if that affair had been anything more than a ball-room flirtation, why does the young gentleman pay his addresses to you, instead of to her?"

"I do not pretend to unravel his motives; he may have been persuaded into it, or have fancied himself bound to make me a formal tender of his hand."

"My dear girl, why should you take the matter in that light? His admiration for my pretty sister-in-law may have led him astray for a moment, but he has evidently discovered his error, and returns to his first, his true faith. You must not bear too hardly upon a transitory aberration of intellect, remembering how men

are constituted; but receive the penitent with indulgence."

" Ah! dear aunt, I do not insist upon entire reciprocity, but read over that letter again, and see if a single spark of love radiates from its measured lines. Why, in the first place, should he have written at all, when he has had so many opportunities of verbal communication? And if you reply, as I see you are about to do, that bashfulness might have withheld him from preferring his suit in person, how is it he can find no warmer words than those to express his feelings? Had his object been to dissuade me from the alliance, he could scarcely have used more appropriate language. Much stress is laid, you will observe, upon 'the inevitable hardships of a soldier's career;' he has 'no settled home to offer me, no brilliant prospects to induce me to share his lot;' if, however, I am willing to forsake country, friends, &c., for his sake, he promises me—what? not the ardent affection that sweetens the bitterest cup, not the unswerving attachment that is an anchor in the wildest storm, not that priceless treasure of the heart which makes the poorest rich, and equalises all distinctions, no, but 'a lasting friendship founded on the most

solid basis, and a constant endeavour to make me forget the sacrifice.”

There was a short pause after this burst of excited feeling, while Anna re-perused the offending document. “It is cool, perhaps,” she then remarked, “but a writer’s style on these agitating occasions, is not always a fair transcript of his mind. The greater his regard for you, the stronger would naturally be his repugnance to expose you to privation or discomfort. Such solicitude for your welfare, as opposed to his own selfish interests, is rather a proof of tenderness than the reverse.”

Mary shook her head despondingly. “A month ago,” she said, “I might have put the same construction upon it, but after what I have witnessed with my own eyes of his devotion to another, it requires something more than a composition like this, to convince me of the sincerity of his regard for myself. The abruptness of this proposal, too, following upon a very visible estrangement, indisposes me to entertain overtures which he might afterwards wish withdrawn.”

“I cannot blame your caution, my dear child. It is far better to apply the pruning-knife to your

hopes now, than have them blighted hereafter by the disappointment of finding indifference where you looked for affection," answered Mrs. Leycester smothering a sigh. " Still, dearest, before you cast away from you the prize it was so lately your highest ambition to win, I would have you count the cost. You have yet to learn the dreary blank created in a woman's life by the closing of the door of hope against her. Should no new interest supersede this, a casualty which you cannot at this time even contemplate with patience, will there not be many lonely hours when you will sigh for the opportunity now lost of securing a husband's sympathy, and surrounding yourself with domestic joys?"

" And domestic cares, dear aunt!" remarked Mary, trying to smile.

" I do not mean unduly to exalt the married state, my love; had you appeared as intoxicated with the distant perfume of orange-blossoms as most young ladies are, I might have taken another line of argument; but seeing you only too keenly alive to what I must call the sentimental part of the case, I think it expedient to remind you of the more prosaic advantages of matrimony."

"I will take no step in the business till I have slept upon it, and seen how it appears to me in to-morrow's light. But indeed, dear aunt, you must not fancy me actuated (as I fear you do), by jealous pique, or an exaggerated estimate of the devotion I ought to inspire, if I cannot bring myself to listen to vows not flowing spontaneously from the heart."

"My love, I sympathise most cordially with your embarrassment, yet I tremble at the chance of a misconception. Are there no means of ascertaining the truth of your doubts before you pronounce the final negative?"

"I can discern but one," rejoined Mary, her eye kindling at the gleam of hope thus dimly visible. "I might convey my refusal in such terms as not to preclude further negociation, should he be really in earnest. If, as I greatly fear, the proposal is only a hollow compliment, he will be quite satisfied with a polite acknowledgment; if he cares for me as much as you suppose, he will not give me up on so slight a discouragement."

"It is a dangerous game to play," said the elder lady, shaking her head dubiously. "Men are apt to resent the very gentlest denial of their

claims. How if his pride take offence and he disdain to renew the offer once rejected?"

"Then, my dear aunt, I must summon a woman's pride to my assistance, and strive to believe that if he valued his dignity more than my love, he neither desired nor deserved it."

CHAPTER XVI.

"Is Rosaline, whom thou didst love so dear,
So soon forsaken? young men's love then lies
Not truly in their hearts but in their eyes."

ROMEO AND JULIET.

"He'll have a widow now,
That shall be woo'd and wedded in a day."
TAMING OF THE SHREW.

MRS. LEYCESTER saw the letter which was despatched to Mr. Maynard next day, and confessed that Mary had accomplished her delicate task with no little ingenuity. The most susceptible temper could not have been ruffled by its courteous tone; there was no allusion to a suspected rival, no hint of any personal objection; the shortness of their acquaintance, the suddenness of the declaration, the writer's consequent inability to form an immediate opinion upon their fitness for each other, were the reasons alleged for withholding her consent. But though a negative response was distinctly given to Arthur's proposal, no lover with a grain of

perspicuity would have abandoned himself to despair, on receiving so mild a dismissal. Some further explanation would assuredly have been demanded, some pains have been taken to remove unfounded objections, some desire, at least, shown that the question should be left open for future consideration. Such, we venture to affirm, would have been a *lover's* way of repairing a preliminary check.

Arthur Maynard read his sentence with strangely mingled emotions of mortification and relief. His vanity was hurt at the idea of being refused by a person he had generously prevailed upon himself to address, while he was glad to be honourably released from all obligations in that quarter, and free to carry his homage elsewhere. It was almost with the accent of triumph that he handed the epistle to his mother, saying, "There, Ma'am, so much for your pet scheme of an alliance with Miss Wentworth. You see how little progress I had made in her good graces," he added, with a tinge of bitterness in his tone.

Mrs. Maynard was surprised and regretful. "I cannot comprehend it," she said: "she cer-

tainly liked you at one time, and would have made you an excellent wife."

The sisters were indignant, taking it almost as a personal insult that their brother should ask and be refused; they "supposed fine company had turned Miss Mary's head," forgetting she had long been accustomed to scenes so new to them. Laura alone divined the feelings which had guided Mary's pen, and saw what a different construction might have been put upon her reply; but she did not think herself warranted in pointing out a hidden meaning, which the principal person concerned showed himself so little solicitous to discover.

If she entertained any doubts as to the prudence of this reserve, they were speedily dissipated by the intelligence that Arthur, far from pining over his discomfiture, was off to Cheltenham, to renew his intimacy with the Leycesters, and that it would certainly not be his fault, if he returned thence a disengaged man. With what favour Mrs. Leycester would regard such a candidate for her pet daughter's hand, was the great question, and jealous as the Maynards were for their brother's dignity, they were half

disposed to hope that on this occasion, his suit might be unsuccessful.

They calculated, however, without a clear understanding of Mrs. Leycester's matrimonial theory. Her aim was not so much to get her children well married—whether rank, wealth, or worth be intended by that expression—as to get them married. She would of course have preferred a coronet and ten thousand a year for Eglantine, and had Lord Etheredge been still in the market, might possibly have requested "time to consider Mr. Maynard's flattering proposal," but her talent did not lie in intrigue, nor did she allow speculation to stand in the way of fact. When, therefore, the slenderly-endowed lieutenant formally besought her permission to address her daughter, she offered scarcely any opposition to his suit.

The damsel herself accepted him with as little hesitation, and for much the same reasons, as she would have done an agreeable partner for a polka; he was good-looking, lively, danced well, and manifested on all possible occasions that admiration of her beauty, and low estimate of her sense, by which young men are wont to recommend themselves to girls of her class. She

liked him, by her own confession, as well as any one she knew, and was moreover impatient to retrieve the disgrace of having been distanced by a younger sister in the race to the altar. It was delightful to be able to write to all her sisters, and hint to all her confidants, that she was *engaged*, actually engaged to "such a nice young officer, who was so desperately in love with her;" delightful to exhibit his profound devotion in all places of resort, and try her power by a variety of time-honoured expedients; delightful above all, to ponder, debate, and decide upon the countless additions to her wardrobe, rendered necessary (!) by her approaching change of state. The minutest details of the ceremonial, from the number and attire of the bridesmaids to the form of announcement in the newspapers, possessed exhaustless charms for her imagination. On what was to come after she never bestowed a thought.

Had the character she was about to assume been the most trifling on a fictitious stage, she could scarcely have undertaken it with less consideration. Life, even in her superficial view, could not have passed for a mere series of balls and pic-nics; yet how little was she prepared for its graver duties! Not once did the enquiry

cross her mind, how she should relish so entire a change of circumstances, how fulfil new household duties, how accommodate herself to a stranger's habits and temper, how discharge (if need were) the maternal office? Such thoughtlessness is not perhaps surprising in a girl of nineteen: but is a man in Arthur's position wise to select a wife so ignorant of her responsibilities? We say in Arthur's position, because had he been master of a large fortune, a carriage, a house in town, and a well-organized establishment of servants, these deficiencies in the mistress would have been of comparatively slight importance; while in the case of a husband of humbler means, whose chief happiness must be sought in the domestic circle, everything depended on the disposition and management of the woman he appointed to preside over it.

The lieutenant was, however, quite as careless of the future as his intended; the ardour which had been perceptibly wanting in his pursuit of Mary, was abundantly displayed in his courtship of Eglantine, and the two young people lived in a kind of fool's paradise, impervious to all the attacks of reason and common-sense.

The wedding followed hard upon the betrothal, for Arthur's furlough was nearly expired. Mrs. Leycester, who had joined her husband abroad, was with him recalled to attend the ceremony early in November—little more than three months after the bridegroom had made her niece the offer of his hand. Very indignant was she at the news, and strongly disposed to blame what she considered almost a breach of faith. Mary was obliged to vindicate him from the charge of deserting a standard under which he had never been regularly enrolled.

But though Mary could take, upon paper, a calm and impartial view of Mr. Maynard's conduct, it is not to be supposed that she witnessed without a pang the downfall of her secret hopes, or failed to torment herself with often-recurring doubts of her own wisdom in the course she had adopted. Yet on going laboriously over the ground again and again, she always arrived at the same conclusion; whatever the result, she had acted to the best of her judgment,—the most enlightened mortal can do no more. "Some natural tears" were excusable when she read the announcement of Arthur's nuptials duly reported in the fashionable papers,

under the head of "Marriage in High Life!"—the high life being represented by Lord and Lady Wilfred Grafton; "Lord and Lady Etheredge," the faithful chronicler took pains to state, "would have been present, but for their absence on the continent."

The Misses Maynard were half reconciled to the match, on seeing their own names among "the fair bevy of bridesmaids;" nor was Mrs. Bathurst quite insensible to the distinction of figuring in the *Morning Post*, while any pique she had previously cherished against her new sister-in-law, was softened by the connexion thus established between herself and Mr. Leycester.

Of the excuse it afforded for more familiar intercourse, that gentleman was not slow to avail himself, and before the wedding party broke up, it was settled that Laura certainly, and her husband if possible, should be among the guests at Hildhurst Lodge, where Hyacinth intended to keep open house during the winter. She felt that every hour spent in his company increased his influence over her; she must have known his character for gallantry; but either confident in her own virtue, or already

powerless to resist the attraction, she could not bring herself to decline the visit.

Mr. Bathurst's assent was less easily obtained. His original antipathy to the exquisite Leycester had been strengthened of late by a secret consciousness of inferiority to him in the arts by which female favour is secured. Though not yet aware of any special cause of jealousy, it galled him to witness the easy assurance of welcome with which Hyacinth approached all women, Mrs. Bathurst included; and the manifest pleasure with which she, like the rest of her sex, received his attentions. However, as they were asked expressly to meet the bride and bridegroom, Mr. Bathurst could not well refuse his wife that satisfaction, and reluctantly agreed to accompany her.

The house was a pleasant one, not large enough to hold many people, but accommodating a select few in the most complete and elegant manner. Mrs. Leycester was the model of a hostess, providing materials in abundance for the entertainment of her guests, without forcing them to build after any particular fashion. Except that he always sat at the bottom of the table, the master of the mansion might readily

have been mistaken for a mere sojourner therein —in the first place because he took so little part in the active duties of hospitality, and secondly, because at least as much thought was taken about him, as fell to the lot of the most favored visitor.

This consideration was the more remarkable, as it did not appear in the conduct of either of the other married ladies present; the current of Mrs. Bathurst's ideas not setting in a conjugal direction, while Mrs. Arthur Maynard, revelling in her newly-acquired power, regarded her consort simply as the most obsequious of slaves. The feminine gender bore as marked a predominance in this union as the masculine in that of the Leycesters; the Bathursts, perhaps, representing the neuter.

It was in society that Anna most often counted herself happy, keenly alive as she was to the perilous pleasure of possessing the enchanter whose voice woke an echo in every female breast. Not that Hyacinth suffered these triumphs to be tarnished by the recollection of slights and ill-humour endured in private. Partly from policy, but far more from the sheer force of habit, he would make love to his wife at times when he

had no other occupation of the kind surrounded her with a perfect network of delicate devices, and delude her into the belief that if she did not reign alone in his heart, she at least held sway over a tolerable share of it. Devoted to him under all circumstances, she was just now overflowing with tenderness because he had declined to go down to the north with Mrs. Flaxmaurice; in the fullness of her satisfaction at which refusal, she overlooked the danger impending nearer home.

The party was completed by three or four bachelors, stars of more or less magnitude in the firmament of fashion, who wandered about the premises by day in a variety of eccentric costumes, and got themselves up at night in a style to dazzle all beholders.

Laura was rather startled on her arrival, at the sight of her host in an entire suit of fine tweed, drab striped with pink, a shirt bordered with tiny rose-buds and confined at the throat by a ribbon to match, and a straw hat after the Eton fashion, with a handful of fresh flowers inserted in the band. Mr. Bathurst muttered "Mountebank," but Mrs. Bathurst was not sure she had ever seen him look handsomer.

Their notions of rural simplicity were utterly put to flight at dinner time, when there was a grand display of studs and fine linen, the ladies being by no means behind hand in the extent of their decorations. Mrs. Leycester, who had a motive for looking as young as possible, generally wore white in the evening. Eglantine was but too happy to exhibit the splendour and variety of her trousseau, to which end she changed her dress about five times a day. Right glad was Laura that she had resisted her husband's attempts to limit her baggage to one portmanteau: she would have been crushed for life at the recollection of having passed for "a dowdy." The only exceptions to the general rule in point of costume, were Mr. Bathurst, who never dressed at all (though he wore the usual amount of clothing), and Mr. Maynard, who in his capacity of bridegroom, was never seen in dishabille, but joined the morning lounge to the stables, or dealt destruction to the pheasants, in a blue frock coat, with a velvet collar, and patent Wellingtons, such as pace the pavement of Bond Street.

The former soon wearied of the gay circle into which he had strayed. He cared

nothing for horses; did not play at billiards, and turned with horror from the coterie that duly assembled on the *perron* after breakfast to smoke a cigar in the sun. The ladies' boudoir, he felt, was no place for him at that hour, or indeed at any other; so the poor man moped about in a solitary manner for a couple of days, and then discovered an urgent reason for immediately returning to town. The claims of business, of course, could not be disputed; but so much was said against his carrying away his wife with him, that he finally yielded that point, and left her in charge of her brother, who undertook to see her safely home.

The worthy lawyer was not much missed. Mrs. Leycester was rather relieved at the departure of a person whom it was not easy to amuse; and perhaps, if the truth were known, Mrs. Bathurst was not sorry either; but to the rest of the party, it was a matter of supreme indifference. Hyacinth's demeanour was not in the least affected; it was but natural that he should attach himself to Mrs. Bathurst in preference to his wife or his sister; and had he harboured the worst of designs, he was far too skilful a practitioner to compromise himself, or Laura, by any

demonstration unwarranted by their relative positions.

Whatever might have been the exact ingredients in Laura's cup of happiness at this period, it is to be feared they were not altogether of a wholesome quality, inasmuch as they destroyed her relish for less stimulating pleasures. When, a week or two after, she went down to her parents in the country, the neighbours and the pastimes of former years appeared unspeakably dull and tiresome. Eglantine, who was also spending her Christmas with the Maynards, engrossed, of course, the largest share of public attention, so that the matron of older standing, being thrown into the back ground, had little to do but to draw parallels between her present and her late associates.

Mary Wentworth gathered with regret, from the accounts which reached her, that despite the admiration lavished upon the bride's pretty face and fine clothes, there was a very general doubt of her being adapted to the husband she had accepted, or the post she had undertaken to fill. "It was pitiable," wrote one of his sisters, "to see this helpless young creature, in her trailing silk and velvet mantle, on board a troop ship;

she looked so ill-fitted to encounter the inevitable discomforts of a long sea-voyage, and, I must add, so little disposed to make the best of them. Arthur thought himself very lucky to get the command of the detachment going out from the depot, because it ensures him a free passage; but of course a steamer would have been much pleasanter for Eglantine. He has engaged one of the soldiers' wives to wait upon her, and will, I am sure, do every thing in his power to spare her annoyance; but it strikes me she does not set out on her pilgrimage in the right spirit, or value as she ought my brother's doting affection. However, it is early yet to find fault with her, poor thing; when once they get to Bermuda, I dare say all will be smooth again. She must have been fond of Arthur, or why did she marry him? and amiable as he is (though I say it) they can hardly fail to be happy."

The last sentence bore in some degree the aspect of a slap at herself; but Mary was more concerned for the loved one's prospects than hurt by the implied contrast between her distrust and Eglantine's unquestioning confidence. "Amiable they may both be," she thought to herself;

"but something more than constitutional placidity is required to steer two untried young persons over a sea which may not always be unruffled."

"There's an end of that couple," was Hyacinth's remark, when informed of his sister's departure. "We shall not be bored with another wedding in the family, for some years to come, seeing Azalea is but fourteen."

It did not occur to him that his mother, having acquired a taste for the game, and not having a daughter to play for just then, might possibly take it into her head to speculate on her own account. True, she had made no vow of perpetual widowhood, and betrayed no displeasure at being supposed open to entreaty; but, perhaps for that very reason, he had never seriously contemplated her forming fresh ties. So, however, it turned out. Finding it tedious to remain in a gay place like Cheltenham, with no excuse for entering into its dissipations, she withdrew to Malvern, and occupied herself with the care of her health,—which was remarkably good. Among the other invalids congregated there, she met with a former acquaintance of hers, the reverend Mr. Desart, who perceiving

her to be in comfortable circumstances, with only the two little girls on her hands, paid her assiduous court, or, as she explained it, permitted himself to indulge hopes long confined to his own breast. Less ridicule, she probably imagined would be attached to the renewal of an old suit than to the preferment of a new one.

Her children did not see the distinction at clearly as she wished. The grown up daughters were furious, the juniors were haunted by vague misgivings. Hyacinth was as angry as it was in his nature to be, at the bare mention of such a scheme. He even talked of withdrawing his patrimony of about £140 a year, which he had made over to his mother on his marriage; but Anna dissuaded him from resuming the grant, and endeavoured to infuse moderation into his verbal remonstrances against the maternal infatuation.

“ Mrs. Leycester is, I believe, but forty-six,” said she. “ Humanly speaking, she has therefore many years of life before her: why should she be condemned to pass them in solitude?”

“ With seven children living, two still at home, the rest within easy access, her solitude is

singularly well peopled," muttered Hyacinth in reply.

"If she can cheer a lonely man's fireside, and add thereby to her own happiness, I do not see what right five, at least, of those children, comfortably seated by hearths of their own, have to complain," pursued Anna insinuatingly.

The argument could not be carried further with her; but Hyacinth rushed off to Malvern, on purpose to renew it with his mother.

"Thank you for the kind intention, my dear boy," said Mrs. Leycester, when he had talked himself out of breath; "but I really think I am the best judge of my own concerns. After devoting myself to my children for so many years, it would be hard if I might not now study my own inclination a little. I cannot understand why you and your sisters should be so cross about it. I never interfered with any of you when you wanted to marry. Mr. Desart is a beneficed clergyman, of good family and unblemished character, suitable in point of age, and not an acquaintance of yesterday. I cannot be insensible to his long attachment; and indeed since you ceased to live with us, I have often sorely felt the want of a protector."

Hyacinth's wrath evaporated before this speech came to a conclusion. The idea of his mother's *sacrifices* to her family during the trying period of chaperonage; of that generous neutrality in their matrimonial negotiations, into which her eagerness to get them off her hands was now translated, and finally of his own past importance as a protector, banished the unwonted gravity from his brow, and sent him home again in half-contemptuous resignation.

"Beyond the ill-will of my future step-father, I have taken nothing by my motion," he said on giving Anna an account of his embassy. "My mother, as you say, has a right to please herself. She cannot alienate any part of her income; and if this reverend admirer of hers be one of the right stamp, his house perhaps will be a better school for my little sisters, than they would otherwise have enjoyed. I confess he did not make a favourable impression upon me."

"You were perhaps a little prejudiced," observed Anna. "Since your mother has known this gentleman a good while, she doubtless knows enough of him to be sure that her happiness is safe in his keeping."

Hyacinth screwed his mouth into a button,

and then unscrewed it to reply: "My private conviction is that you are at the bottom of my wretched parent's insanity."

"I, Cinthy? why, what in the name of Hymen have I to do with her proceedings?"

"This," returned Hyacinth, sententiously; "I believe she has snatched at the opportunity of changing her name chiefly because she is tired of hearing you called 'young Mrs. Leycester.'"

A pitiful reason, it may be thought. How many women daily marry without being able to assign one more substantial?

END OF VOL I.



IN ONE VOL., FOOLSCAP OCTAVO, PRICE 4s., CLOTH,

GLAD TIDINGS.

—o—

FROM "THE TIMES," NOV. 7TH.

When we say that the scene on which the actors in this little story move is laid at Athens, that the date of the action is the year 65 A.D., and that the chief personage in it is St. Paul, assisted by "Dionysius the Areopagite," and "a woman named Damaris," our readers will have no difficulty in guessing that this is a religious story, and that the "glad tidings" here announced relate to the preaching of the Apostle to the Gentiles on Mars' Hill. The question arises, why tell a story about a truth? Why embody in a work of fiction scenes so sacred as those described in the Acts of the Apostles? The answer is that there have been Tales before this in which characters more sacred than that of St. Paul have been brought upon the stage of fiction, and in which religious subjects have been handled with a freedom—nay, with a licence—of which there is not a trace in this little book. This is a religious book on a sacred subject, and its sole intention is to edify the Christian reader by imaginary examples of the faith and constancy which enabled the converts of the early ages to triumph over death itself.

But now another question arises—Is the subject well treated? Is it, so far as so slight a story can be, a work of art? We think it is. The plot is simple enough. Damaris mourns for Callias, her absent lover, and finds no comfort in prayers to any of the gods. There is a shipwreck off the Piraeus, and in that ship are St. Paul and Callias, the author supposing, as we infer, that this was one of the occasions unrecorded in the Acts, but indicated in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, in which the Apostle to the Gentiles endured the dangers of the deep. St. Paul saves the life of Callias after he has sustained the spirits of all on board by his faith; but the lover only reaches the shore to fall into a fever, and Damaris still mourns her lost Callias. The shipwrecked mariners noise the Apostle's fame throughout the city; then follows the scene on Mars' Hill and the rebuke of the superstitious worship of "the unknown god." Shortly after St. Paul meets Damaris by accident at the altar of that dark divinity, whither she had gone to pray, for she had heard that this, after all, was the true God. She reveals her grief, and after words of comfort she promises to see him again, and says her name is Damaris. "Damaris!" repeated the Apostle,

"and he for whom thou would'st pray is named Callias ; give me thy hand, and I will lead thee to him." Callias, of course, recovers, and thus the story goes on, the Apostle making converts among the seniors of the city, and among others Dionysius the Areopagite, besides especially instructing the youthful pair in Christian truth, and advising Damaris to lay aside her gay attire and plaiting of the hair, and to put on a garb becoming to a Christian woman.

On one occasion, when Damaris has been chosen to fill the chief place among the maidens of the city in the Pan-Athenaic procession, a tumult arises, because Damaris, chosen against her will, appears in homely dress, and refuses to take part in the idolatrous ceremony. The house in which the Apostle and his converts are living is surrounded by a mob, who accuse him of having obtained an influence over their minds by magic, and everything looks like Socrates and hemlock, if not a speedier death, when the Apostle exerts the magic of his Roman citizenship, and the mob slink off, awed by the presence of a few Roman legionaries.

So things progress, and Callias and Damaris, the Christian pair, might have been united by Christian rites, instead of heathen ceremonies; but that the course of true love should run smooth is not to be expected, least of all in a religious tale, and so Callias is assassinated by Alexander the Coppersmith—of whom, we may remark, from the Second Epistle to Timothy, that we should rather have expected to find him at Ephesus than at Athens—but who, wherever he abode, seems, like Demetrius of Ephesus, to have driven a good trade in shrines, and who had just lost an order through the interference of the young Christian.

The loss of Callias is naturally a great blow to Damaris, but Christianity and the Apostle enable her to bear up under her affliction. And now the story hastens to a close. Alexander is tried solemnly for the murder and escapes, inasmuch as he had slain an enemy of the gods. The Apostle's work is over in Athens, and, after a solemn warning to the idolatrous authorities, he shakes off the dust of Athens from his feet, and departs for Asia with his convert Damaris, whom her friends vainly endeavour to divert from her purpose.

The little Tale is good in tone and keeping, and a few inconsistencies which it presents to the deeply read classical scholar are not such as to spoil its effect on the general public. If it should edify any among the careless herd of "babblers" in this generation "who spend their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing," we imagine that the purpose of the author will be amply fulfilled.

MR. NEWBY'S NEW PUBLICATIONS.

NEW NOVELS.

I.

In 1 vol. post 8vo., price 10s. 6d.

A D A M B E D E, J U N I O R.

A SEQUEL.

II.

In 2 vols. post 8vo. price 21s.

C O M I N G E V E N T S C A S T T H E I R SHADOWS BEFORE.

III.

In 1 vol., price 10s. 6d.

M Y C O U N T R Y N E I G H B O U R S.

By G. M. STERNE,

Great-Cousin of Laurence Sterne, author of the "Sentimental Journey."

IV.

In 3 vols. post 8vo., price 31s. 6d. (In November.)

T H E G R E A T E X P E R I M E N T.

By MISS MOLESWORTH,

Author of the "Stumble on the Threshold," &c.

V.

In 1 vol. fcap. 8vo., price 4s. (Now ready.)

G L A D T I D I N G S.

VI.

In 3 vols. post 8vo., price 31s. 6d. (In December.)

T R I E D I N T H E F I R E.

By MRS. MACKENZIE DANIELS,

Author of "My Sister Minnie," "The Old Maid of the Family," &c.

VII.

In 3 vols. post. 8vo., price 31s. 6d. (In November.)

THE HOME AND THE PRIEST.

By SIGNOR VOLPE,

[Author of "Memoirs of an Ex-Capuchin; or Scenes in Monastic Life in Italy."]

The late Leigh Hunt's opinion of the work :—"I think the work interesting; its exhibitions, in particular of some of the passions, masterly; and I am also of opinion that all which is related of Italian manners and customs, and of the vices and machinations of the priesthood, would be extremely welcome to my countrymen in general."

VIII.

In 3 vols., price 31s. 6d.

THE FATE OF FOLLY.

By LORD BEEFEESE,

Author of "Masters and Workmen," &c.

"This is one of the very few works of fiction that should be added to every Public Free Library. It contains more moral lessons, more to elevate the minds of readers, and has higher aims than almost any novel we have read. At the same time, it is replete with incident and amusement."—*Globe*.

"It is a good book."—*Spectator*.

IX.

In 3 vols., price 31s. 6d.

BETTY WESTMINSTER.

By W. PLATT, Esq.

"A lesson of sound practical morality, inculcated with charming effect;—a story which bears in every chapter the impress of intellect, taste, and sensibility."—*Morning Post*.

"Betty Westminster is the representative of a type of society but little used by novelists—the money-getting tradesmen of provincial towns. It is written with talent and considerable skill."—*New Quarterly Review*.

"There is a great deal of cleverness in this story."—*Examiner*.

"There is much comic satire in it. The author has power worth cultivating."—*Examiner*.

"There is a good deal of spirit in these volumes, and great talent shown in the book."—*Athenaeum*.

"A book of greater interest has not come under our notice for years."—*Review*.

"All is described by a master hand."—*John Bull*.

X.

In 3 vols., price 31s. 6d.

GEORGE BARRINGTON.

By the Author of "Old Memories," &c.

"This novel is full of power, full of interest, and full of those fascinations and spells which none but the extraordinarily-gifted can produce."—*Globe*.

XL.

In 2 vols. post 8vo., price 21s.

BEVERLEY PRIORY.

"This is an admirable tale."—*Naval and Military*.

"Beverley Priory is in no part of it a dull novel, and is unquestionably clever."—*Examiner*.

XII.

In 3 vols., price 31s. 6d.

THE PARSON AND THE POOR.

"There is much that is very good in this tale; it is cleverly written, and with good feeling."—*Athenaeum*.

"We have read this novel with a great deal of pleasure; the dialogue is always spirited and natural. The children talk like children, and the men and women remind us of flesh and blood."—*Morning Herald*.

"The characters and incidents are such as will live in the memory of the reader, while the style and spirit of the book will render it not only pleasant but profitable reading."—*Bradford Review*.

"The author has made the incidents of every-day life a vehicle through which lessons of virtue, blended with religion, may be conveyed."—*Kilkenny Moderator*.

"A story of country life, written by one who knows well how to describe both cottage and hall life."—

"It bears the impress of truth and Nature's simplicity throughout."—*Illustrated News of the World*.

XIII.

In 3 vols., price 31s. 6d.

SYBIL GREY.

"Sybil Grey is a novel to be read by a mother to a daughter, or by a father to the loved circle at the domestic fireside."—*Paisley Herald*.

XIV.

In 2 vols., price 21s.

THE COUNT DE PERBRUCK.

By HENRY COOKE, Esq.

"A tale of the Vendean war, invested with a new interest. Mr. Cooke has done his part most successfully. His vivid, graphic colouring and well-chosen incidents prove him a master in the art of historical delineation."—*Guardian*.

"Of Mr. Cooke's share in the work we can speak with deserved approbation."—*Press*.

"It has the merit of keeping alive the excitement of the reader till the closing page."—*Morning Post*.

"This highly-interesting romance will find a place amongst the standard works of fiction."—*Family Herald*.

"This is an experiment, and a successful one."—*Atlas*.

XV.

In 3 vols., price 31s. 6d.

T H E C A M P B E L L S.

"The story is full of interest."—*Enquirer*.

XVI.

In 3 vols., price 31s. 6d.

E B B A N D F L O W .

"It will amuse those who like to find something out of the usual even tenor of a novel; to such it can fairly be recommended."—*The Sun*.

XVII.

In 1 vol., price 7s. 6d.

M I L L Y W A R R E N E R .

"A pleasant, unpretending story; it is a life-like story of a young country girl more refined than her station. There are little incidental sketches of country characters which are clever and spirited."—*Athenaeum*.

XVIII.

In 3 vols., price 31s. 6d.

M A S T E R A N D P U P I L .

By MRS. MACKENZIE DANIELS.

XIX.

In 1 vol., price 5s. (In November.)

**SPIRITUALISM, AND THE AGE WE
LIVE IN.**

By CATHARINE CROWE,

Author of "The Night Side of Nature," "Ghost Stories," &c.

XX.

In 2 vols. post 8vo., price 21s.

MY FIRST TRAVELS;

Including Rides in the Pyrenees; Scenes during an Inundation at Avignon; Sketches in France and Savoy; Visits to Convents and Houses of Charity, &c. &c.

By SELINA BUNBURY.

XXI.

In 1 vol. post 8vo., price 10s. 6d.

OUR PLAGUE SPOT:

In connection with our Polity and Usages as regards our Women, our Soldiery, and the Indian Empire.

XXII.

In 2 vols., price 21s.

AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHS.

By the MISSES TURNBULL.

"It is exceedingly amusing, and marked by energy and power."—*Globe*.

"Twenty-six thousand miles of travel, by two young ladies, in search of the new, the beautiful, and the instructive! We do not know that a reader could desire more amusing *compagnons de voyage* than these two sprightly, intelligent, well-educated, and observant young Englishwomen."—*Morning Advertiser*.

"A number of amusing anecdotes give life and interest to the narrative."—*Brighton Examiner*.

"Very pleasant gossiping volumes."—*Critic*.

"These volumes are replete with lively, entertaining sketches of American manners and customs, sayings and doings."—*Naval and Military*.

"Contains much information respecting the manners and habits of our transatlantic cousins."—*Sun*.

"The narrative is evidently truthful, as it is clear and intelligible."—*Herald*.

MR. NEWBY'S NEW PUBLICATIONS.

XXIII.

In 1 vol., price 10s. 6d.

SUNDAY, THE REST OF LABOUR.

Dedicated to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

"This important subject is discussed ably and temperately; and though many differences will arise in the minds of some of our clergy, as well as some pious laymen, it should be added to every library."—*Herald*.

"Written by a churchman, who is evidently a man with deep and sincere religious feelings. His book is temperately written, and will have a wholesome tendency, if wisely received."—*Examiner*.

XXIV.

In 1 vol., price 2s. 6d.

DRAWING-ROOM CHARADES FOR ACTING.

By C. WARREN ADAMS, Esq.

"A valuable addition to Christmas diversions. It consists of a number of well-constructed scenes for charades."—*Guardian*.

XXV.

In 1 vol., price 12s.

MERRIE ENGLAND.

By LORD WILLIAM LENNOX.

"It overflows with racy, poignant anecdotes of a generation just passed away. The book is destined to lie upon the tables of many a country mansion."—*Leader*.

XXVI.

In 1 vol., price 5s.

KNIGHTS OF THE CROSS.

By MRS. AGAR.

"Nothing can be more appropriate than this little volume, from which the young will learn how their forefathers venerated and fought to preserve those places hallowed by the presence of the Saviour."—*Guardian*.

"Mrs Agar has written a book which young and old may read with profit and pleasure."—*Sunday Times*.

"It is a work of care and research, which parents may well wish to see in the hands of their children."—*Leader*.

"A well-written history of the Crusades, pleasant to read, and good to look upon."—*Critic*.

XXVII.

In 1 vol. post 8vo. price 10s. 6d.

AN AUTUMN IN SILESIA, AUSTRIA PROPER, AND THE OBER ENNS.

By the Author of "Travels in Bohemia."

XXVIII.

STEPS ON THE MOUNTAINS.

"This is a step in the right way, and ought to be in the hands of the youth of both sexes."—*Review*.

"The moral of this graceful and well-constructed little tale is, that Christian influence and good example have a better effect in doing the good work of reformatioin than the prison, the treadmill, or even the reformatory."—*Critic*.

"The Steps on the Mountains are traced in a loving spirit. They are earnest exhortations to the sober and religious-minded to undertake the spiritual and temporal improvement of the condition of the destitute of our lanes and alleys. The moral of the tale is well carried out; and the bread which was cast upon the waters is found after many days, to the saving and happiness of all therein concerned."—*Athenaeum*.

XXIX.

In 1 vol., price 5s.

FISHES AND FISHING.

By W. WRIGHT, Esq.

"Anglers will find it worth their while to profit by the author's experience."—*Athenaeum*.

"The pages abound in a variety of interesting anecdotes connected with the rod and the line. The work will be found both useful and entertaining to the lovers of the piscatory art."—*Morning Post*.

"It is both amusing and instructive."—*Daily Telegraph*.

"A pleasant and gossiping book on the subject, with authentic facts gleaned from sources which could be depended upon, and worthy to be remembered, relative to angling in all its branches."—*Lancet*.

XXX.

DEAFNESS AND DISEASES OF THE EAR.

The Fallacies of the Treatment exposed, and Remedies suggested.
From the Experience of half a Century.

By W. WRIGHT, Esq.,
Surgeon Aurist to her late Majesty, Queen Charlotte,

XXXI.

In 1 vol. post 8vo. 10s. 6d.

**ZEAL IN THE WORK OF THE
MINISTRY.**

By L'ABBE DUBOIS.

"There is a tone of piety and reality in the work of l'Abbe Dubois, and a unity of aim, which is to fix the priest's mind on the duties and responsibilities of his whole position, and which we admire. The writer is occupied supremely with one thought of contributing to the salvation of souls and to the glory of God."—*Literary Churchman.*

XXXII.

In 1 vol., price 10s. 6d.

**THE NEW EL DORADO; OR
BRITISH COLUMBIA.**

By KINAHAN CORNWALLIS.

"The book is full of information as to the best modes existing or expected of reaching these enviable countries."—*Morning Chronicle.*

"The book gives all the information which it is possible to obtain respecting the new colony called British Columbia. The book is altogether one of a most interesting and instructive character."—*The Star.*

"The work is very spiritedly written, and will amuse and instruct."—*Observer.*

XXXIII.

In 2 vols. post 8vo., price 21s.

A PANORAMA OF THE NEW WORLD.

By KINAHAN CORNWALLIS,

Author of "Two Journeys to Japan," &c.

"Nothing can be more spirited, graphic, and full of interest, nothing more pictorial or brilliant in its execution and animation."—*Globe.*

"One of the most amusing tales ever written."—*Review.*

"He is a lively, rattling writer. The sketches of Peruvian Life and manners are fresh, racy and vigorous. The volumes abound with amusing anecdotes and conversations."—*Weekly Mail.*

XXXIV.

In 1 vol., price 10s. 6d.

N I L D E S P E R A N D U M,
BEING AN ESCAPE FROM ITALIAN DUNGEONS.

"We find the volume entertaining, and really Italian in spirit."
Athenaeum.
 "There is much fervour in this romantic narrative of suffering."
Examiner.

XXXV.

In 1 vol. 8vo. price 10s. 6d.

L I F E O F ALEXANDER THE FIRST.
By IVAN GOLOVIN.

"It is a welcome contribution to Russian imperial biography."
Leader.
 "Mr. Golevin possesses fresher information, a fresher mind and manner applied to Russian affairs, than foreigners are likely to possess."—*Spectator.*

XXXVI.

In 2 vols., price 21s.

**THIRTY-FIVE YEARS OF A DRAMATIC
A U T H O R ' S L I F E .**

By EDWARD FITZBALL, Esq.

"We scarcely remember any biography so replete with anecdotes of the most agreeable description. Everybody in the theatrical world, and a great many out of it, figure in this admirable biography."—*Globe.*

"One of the most curious collections of histrionic incidents ever put together. Fitzball numbers his admirers not by hundreds and thousands, but by millions."—*Liverpool Albion.*

"A most wonderful book about all sorts of persons."—*Birmingham Journal.*

XXXVII.

In 1 vol., price 10s. 6d.

G H O S T S T O R I E S .

By CATHARINE CROWE,

Author of "Night Side of Nature."

"Mrs. Crowe's volume will delight the lovers of the supernatural, and their name is legion."—*Morning Post.*

"These Tales are calculated to excite all the feelings of awe, and we may say of terror, with which Ghost Stories have ever been read."—*Morning Advertiser.*

XXXVIII.

In 2 vols. post 8vo.

TEA TABLE TALK.

By MRS. MATHEWS.

"Livingstone's Africa, and Mrs. Mathews' Tea Table Talk will be the two most popular works of the season."—*Bicester Herald*.

"It is ordinary criticism to say of a good gossiping book, that it is a volume for the sea-side, or for the fireside, or wet weather, or for a sunny nook, or in a shady grove, or for after dinner over wine and walnuts. Now these lively, gossiping volumes will be found adapted to all these places, times, and circumstances. They are brimfull of anecdotes. There are pleasant little biographical sketches and ambitious essays."—*Athenaeum*.

"The anecdotes are replete with point and novelty and truthfulness."—*Sporting Magazine*.

"No better praise can be given by us than to say, that we consider this work one of, if not the most agreeable books that has come under our notice."—*Guardian*.

"For Book Clubs and Reading Societies no work can be found that will prove more agreeable."—*Express*.

"The widow of the late, and the mother of the present Charles Mathews would, under any circumstances, command our respect, and if we could not conscientiously praise her work, we should be slow to condemn it. Happily, however, the volumes in question are so good, that in giving this our favourable notice we are only doing justice to the literary character of the writer; her anecdotes are replete with point and novelty and truthfulness that stamps hem genuine."—*Sporting Review*.

XXXIX.

In 2 vols., post 8vo., price 21s.

TWO JOURNEYS TO JAPAN.

By KINAHAN CORNWALLIS.

"The mystery of Japan melts away as we follow Mr. Cornwallis. He enjoyed most marvellous good fortune, for he carried a spell with him which dissipated Japanese suspicion and procured him all sorts of privileges. His knowledge of Japan is considerable. It is an amusing book."—*Athenaeum*.

"This is an amusing book, pleasantly written, and evidencing generous feeling."—*Literary Gazette*.

"We can honestly recommend Mr. Cornwallis's book to our readers."—*Morning Herald*.

"The country under his pencil comes out fresh, dewy, and picturesque before the eye. The volumes are full of amusement, lively and graphic."—*Chambers' Journal*.

XL.

In 1 vol. post 8vo., price 10s. 6d.

HISTORICAL GLEANINGS AT HOME AND ABROAD.

By MRS. JAMIESON.

"This work is characterized by forcible and correct descriptions of men and manners in bygone years. It is replete with passages of the deepest interest."—*Review*.

XLI.

In 1 vol., price 5s.

THINGS WORTH KNOWING ABOUT HORSES.

By HARRY HIEOVER.

"From the days of Nimrod until now no man has made so many, few more valuable additions to what may be called 'Sporting Literature.' To those skilled in horses this little volume will be very welcome, whilst to the raw youth its teachings will be as precious as refined gold."—*Critic*.

"Into this little volume Harry Hieover has contrived to cram an innumerable quantity of things worth knowing about the tricks and bad habits of all kinds of horses, harness, starting, shying and trotting; about driving; about the treatment of ailing horses; about corns, peculiarities of shape and make; and about stables, training, and general treatment."—*Field*.

"It is a useful hand-book about horses."—*Daily Telegraph*.

"Few men have produced better works upon the subject of horses than Harry Hieover."—*Review*.

"The author has omitted nothing of interest in his 'Things worth knowing about horses.'"—*Athenæum*.

XLII.

In 1 vol., demy 8vo., price 12s.

THE SPORTSMAN'S FRIEND IN A FROST.

By HARRY HIEOVER.

"Harry Hieover's practical knowledge and long experience in field sports, render his writings ever amusing and instructive. He relates most pleasing anecdotes of flood and field, and is well worthy of study."—*The Field*.

"No sportsman's library should be without it."—*Sporting Magazine*.

"There is amusement as well as intelligence in Harry Hieover's book."—*Athenæum*.

XLIII.

In 1 vol., price 5s.

THE SPORTING WORLD.

By HARRY HIEOVER.

"Reading Harry Hieover's book is like listening lazily and luxuriously after dinner to a quiet, gentlemanlike, clever talker."—*Athenaeum*.

"It will be perused with pleasure by all who take an interest in the manly game of our fatherland. It ought to be added to every sportsman's library."—*Sporting Review*.

XLIV.

In 1 vol. demy 8vo., price 12s.

SPORTING FACTS AND SPORTING FANCIES.

By HARRY HIEOVER,

Author of "Stable Talk and Table Talk," "The Pocket and the Stud," "The Hunting Field," &c.

"This work will make a valuable and interesting addition to the Sportman's Library."—*Bell's Life*.

"In addition to the immense mass of practical and useful information with which this work abounds, there is a refreshing buoyancy and dash about the style, which makes it as attractive and fascinating as the pages of the renowned Nimrod himself."—*Dispatch*.

¶ "It contains graphic sketches of celebrated young sporting characters."—*Sunday Times*.

XLV.

In 1 vol., price 5s. Third edition.

THE PROPER CONDITION FOR ALL HORSES:

By HARRY HIEOVER.

"It should be in the hands of all owners of horses."—*Bell's Life*.

"A work which every owner of a horse will do well to consult."—*Morning Herald*.

"Every man who is about purchasing a horse, whether it be hunter, riding-horse, lady's palfrey, or cart-horse, will do well to make himself acquainted with the contents of this book."—*Sporting Magazine*.

XLVI.

In 1 vol., price 5s.

THE WORLD AND HOW TO SQUARE IT.

By HARRY HIEOVER.

XLVII.

In 1 vol., price 5s.

P R E C E P T A N D P R A C T I C E.

By HARRY HIEOVER.

XLVIII.

In 1 vol., price 5s.

**H I N T S T O H O R S E M E N,
SHEWING HOW TO MAKE MONEY BY HORSES.**

By HARRY HIEOVER.

"When Harry Hieover gives hints to Horsemen, he does not mean by that term riders exclusively, but owners, breeders, buyers, sellers, and admirers of horses. To teach such men how to make money is to impart no valueless instruction to a large class of mankind. The advice is frankly given, and if no benefit result, it will not be for the want of good counsel."—*Athenaeum*.

"It is by far the most useful and practical book that Harry Hieover has written."—*Express*.

XLIX.

In 1 vol., price 4s.

B I P E D S A N D Q UADRUP E D S.

By HARRY HIEOVER.

"We recommend this little volume for the humanity towards quadrupeds it advocates, and the proper treatment of them that it inculcates."—*Bell's Life*.

L.

C H R I S T M A S G I F T B O O K.

Price 1s. 6d.

P R I N C E L I F E.

By G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.,

Author of "The Gipsy," "Richelieu," &c.

"It is worth its weight in gold."—*The Globe*.

"Most valuable to the rising generation; an invaluable little book."—*Guardian*.

LI.

In 2 vols. post 8vo., price 2ls.

**N A P L E S,
POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND RELIGIOUS.**

By LORD B * * * * *

"The pictures are as lively and bright as the colours and climate they reflect."—*Spectator*.

"It is a rapid, clear historical sketch."—*Advertiser*.

"The author has done good service to society."—*Court Circular*.

LII.

In 2 vols., price 21s., cloth.

**THE LIFE OF PERCY BYSSHE
SHELLEY.**

By CAPTAIN MEDWIN,

Author of "Conversations with Lord Byron."

"This book must be read by every one interested in literature."—*Morning Post*.

"A complete life of Shelley was a desideratum in literature, and there was no man so competent as Captain Medwin to supply it."—*Inquirer*.

"The book is sure of exciting much discussion."—*Literary Gazette*.

LIII.

Second Edition, now ready, in 3 vols., price 42s.

**THE LITERARY LIFE AND CORRESPONDENCE
OF THE**

COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

By R. MADDEN, Esq., F.R.C.S.-ENG.

Author of "Travels in the East," "Life of Savonarola," &c.

"We may, with perfect truth affirm, that during the last fifty years there has been no book of such peculiar interest to the literary and political world. It has contributions from every person of literary reputation—Byron, Sir E. Bulwer, who contributes an original Poem) James, D'Israeli, Marryatt, Savage Landor, Campbell, L. E. L., the Smiths, Shelley, Jenkyn, Sir W. Gell, Jekyll, &c. &c.; as well as letters from the most eminent Statesmen and Foreigners of distinction, the Duke of Wellington, Marquis Wellesley, Marquis Douro, Lords Lyndhurst, Brougham, Durham, Abinger, &c."—*Morning Post*.

LIV.

Price 2s. 6d. beautifully illustrated.

THE HAPPY COTTAGE,
A TALE FOR SUMMER'S SUNSHINE.

By the Author of "Kate Vernon," "Agnes Waring."

LV.

In 1 vol., price 7s. 6d.

ON SEX IN THE WORLD TO COME.

By the Rev. G. B. HAUGHTON, A.M.

"A peculiar subject; but a subject of great interest, and in this volume treated in a masterly style. The language is surpassingly good, showing the author to be a learned and a thoughtful man."—*New Quarterly Review*.

LVI.

In 1 vol., 8vo.

THE AGE OF Pitt AND FOX.

By DANIEL OWEN MADDEN,

Author of "Chiefs of Poarty," &c.

The *Times* says "We may safely pronounce it to be the best text-book of the age which it professes to describe."

LVII.

In 3 vols. demy 8vo., price 2*l.* 14*s.*

A CATHOLIC HISTORY OF ENGLAND.

By W. B. MAC CABE, Esq.

"A work of great literary value."—*Times*.

LVIII.

In 1 vol., price 14*s.*

**LIVES OF THE PRIME MINISTERS
OF ENGLAND.**

FROM THE RESTORATION TO THE PRESENT TIME.

By J. HOUSTON BROWN, L.L.B.

Of the Inner Temple, Barrister-at-Law.

"The Biographer has collected the facts relating to the family and career of his four subjects, Clarendon, Clifford, Danby and Essex, and stated these facts with clearness;—selected such personal traits as the memoirs and lampoons of the time have presented, and interspersed his biographies with passing notices of the times and reflections, which though sometimes harsh in character or questionable in taste, have independence, and, at all events, a limited truth."—*Spectator*.

LIX.

In 2 vols. price 21s.

SHELLEY AND HIS WRITINGS.

By C. S. MIDDLETON, Esq.

"Never was there a more perfect specimen of biography."—*Walter Savage Landor, Esq.*

"Mr. Middleton has done good service. He has carefully sifted the sources of information we have mentioned, has made some slight addition, and arranged his materials in proper order and in graceful language. It is the first time the mass of scattered information has been collected, and the ground is therefore cleared for the new generation of readers."—*Athenaeum*.

"The Life of the Poet which has just appeared, and which was much required, is written with great beauty of expression and clearness of purpose. Mr. Middleton's book is a masterly performance."—*Somerset Gazette*.

"Mr. Middleton has displayed great ability in following the poet through all the mazes of his life and thoughts. We recommend the work as lively, animated, and interesting. It contains many curious disclosures."—*Sunday Times*.

LX.

In 1 vol. price 10s. 6d.

**THE HOME OF OUR PRINCESS;
OR, MOUNTAINS AND CITIES.**

By SIBELLA JONES.

"The style is pleasing and tripping, the incidents striking and numerous, and the estimates of trans-Rhenan character free from educational bias and national prejudices."—*Daily Telegraph*.

LXI.

In 1 vol. 8vo. with Map.

THE HISTORY OF THE BERMUDAS.

By G. F. WILLIAMS, Esq.

LXI.

In 2 vols. post 8vo. price 21s.

THE AUSTRIAN EMPIRE.

By WILLIAM PEAKE, Esq.

"It has great historic value, and likely to be valuable for references."—*Daily News*.

"It presents by far the best view that has yet appeared of Austria."—*Naval and Military Gazette*.

**LONDON : T. C. NEWBY, 30, WELBECK STREET,
CAVENDISH SQUARE.**



—



M